

Treasury of the Forest of Ancestors by Satyavayu

(135-page collection of traditional Zen teaching dialogues)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dE1M3CHFbOn-stANx8NmcHXfoWKaZtC7gXeqWgFJKVc/edit?hl=en>

Satya Vayu (1969-)

Satya is the practice guide for Touching Earth Sangha. While studying Asian religion at Oberlin College, Satya began a daily sitting practice in 1990. After graduating and moving west, he practiced at the Berkley Zen Center and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, before taking off to Asia on pilgrimage. After visiting various teachers in Japan, he sat a three month silent training period in Korea under the guidance of Zen Master Seung Sahn. He then continued to India, visiting the important sites from the Buddha's life, and traversing the Himalayas on foot from Dharamsala to Leh, Ladakh. Returning to the states, Satya continued his practice with Kobun Chino Otogawa Roshi, who ordained him as a Zen priest in 1995. He then returned to Japan for monastic training at Bukkokuji Temple under the guidance of Zen Master Harada Tangen Roshi. Spending most of the next five years with Tangen Roshi, Satya then practiced briefly at Zhenru Temple on Yunju Mountain in China before returning to the states in 2000.

Committed to remaining homeless and not working for money, Satya lived mostly with forest activists for the next few years, often sitting in tree platforms in remote forests up and down the west coast. Eventually settling in Portland, he took up the study of Tai Chi and Indian raga music, while leading a Sunday sitting group and helping Food-Not-Bombs bring free vegetarian feasts to

public parks. Having lived homeless during the last ten years, he often moves from place to place staying wherever he is invited.

<http://touchingearth.info/poems/>

Preface

This collection of teachings from the Zen tradition began as a humble project. I just wanted to assemble some stories for use in talks during a retreat, but this simple initiative soon morphed into an unwieldy time-devouring behemoth. It's now a full-fledged compendium of classic “encounter dialogues” and sermons of many of the famous masters of Tang Dynasty China. I don't know how it happened. If I had known early on how long it would take, I probably would have steered toward a more modest endeavor, but the work had it's own momentum, and here we are.

As most of these teachings are fairly easy to find in a number of already published books, you might wonder why I've bothered to re-assemble them. Good question. I'm wondering the same thing. But I have a few ideas. One is that most of this material is scattered throughout many different books, and I wanted to put them together into one easily-accessible reference work. Also I wanted to keep all the stories about a certain teacher together in one section, and to arrange the teachers roughly chronologically. There are one or two books out there that do this, but I felt they were generally either not comprehensive enough (not including all the important dialogues for each teacher), in other ways too comprehensive (covering too many teachers), or I simply wanted to make different selections. I also found myself unsatisfied with many of the translations, and so I ended up creating some new wordings using several different English versions. So basically, I just wanted to do it my way.

The bulk of this collection (Part One) consists of innumerable little snippets of spoken conversation between various teachers and their students (or occasionally between two teachers or two students) that have been called “encounter dialogues” by several prominent contemporary Zen scholars (a translation of the Chinese “chi-yuan wen-ta” or the Japanese “kien mondo”). They are the most distinctive and famous form of religious literature in the Zen tradition. These dialogues are not quite the same thing as gong'an (Chinese for “public case”; pronounced in Japanese as “koan”) although they are the source for most of them. A Gong'an is a pithy collection of words that serves as a topic for meditation, or for a talk, or for a spirited challenge between a teacher and student in later Zen practice-culture. These words are often a fragment of a classic encounter dialogue, or they might be a question about the meaning of a dialogue, or a challenge to find a novel alternative response to a dialogue. They might also involve the presentation of a whole dialogue, but, in any case, they are directed toward a particular use in practice. Here I'm just trying to present the original stories that were the sources for most of the classic gong'an, and let the reader find their own most appropriate use for themselves.

As far as the historical evidence for these dialogues being the authentic words of the masters they're attributed to - there is none.

Actually, at least for the earlier teachers in Zen history, we can be pretty sure that not only do their recorded conversations have little chance of being what they actually said, but often much of their famous life stories, as well, were likely fabricated by later writers and editors (for example, in the case of the “sixth ancestor” Huineng). The oldest written collection of encounter dialogues (at least in their mature form) that has been found so far, is called the *Ancestral Hall Collection*, which dates from 952 during the Five Dynasties period (after the collapse of the Tang, and just before the rise of the Song Dynasty).

This is a good two hundred years after the lives of the early foundational teachers whose words this collection claims to record.

Also, who would have been the meticulous reporters recording these spontaneous exchanges, anyway? Oh, well - they're still good stories.

And even if the exact words aren't historically attributable to a claimed

author, I feel that the spirit of the early masters' teachings are likely to be in line with these later re-wordings. The real question, of course, is how do they effect us today?

Part Two of this collection contains a few excerpts from the recorded sermons, or discourses, of some of the more famous classical masters.

Historians tend to feel that these are more likely to be closer to the authentic words of the masters than the dialogues, both for the reason that they were more likely to have been recorded at the time they were given, and because texts have been found containing at least parts of them that were written fairly close to the lifetimes of the supposed speakers. This is particularly true in the cases of Baizhang Huaihai, Huangbo Xiyun, and Guishan Lingyu, for all of whom we have found records that were collected and published right around the time of their deaths.

Some Zen scholars maintain that the relative conventionality of these discourses, compared to the dialogues, show that the more radical style of presentation that Zen is famous for was really a literary invention of the early Song compilers of the encounter-dialogue collections, and not a feature of the classical Tang Dynasty masters that were said to be its originators. But I don't buy that. First of all, lectures, by their format and audience, tend to be more conventional than spontaneous exchanges, but that doesn't imply lecturers don't have spontaneous exchanges as well. And when we remember how much less likely it would be for a spontaneous exchange to be recorded than a public lecture, we must allow that they could easily have been going on as a teaching method, even if unrecorded. When they finally were committed to writing in the *Ancestral Hall Collection*, they suddenly appeared in a sophisticated and well-developed form, and in profusion, which certainly suggests that these various dialogue stories had already existed for a while in oral form. Of course, it's not really so important to decide who came up with the Zen method of radical dialogue, just that we have it to learn from. The weakly-founded implication that it was simply a literary device betrays an ignorance of the living practice of this kind of verbal interaction that still exists today, and, in fact, can be found in similar forms in the spiritual traditions of other cultures..

In addition, the sermons themselves are, it turns out, quite radical; maybe not in presentation or format, but certainly in content.

Huangbo's talks in particular have been perennially shocking, refreshing and inspiring to many over the centuries. (Only a short excerpt appears in this collection because his record is well known – I've tried to include more of the less familiar materials in my selections). Even the very early writings concerning the mysterious Master Yuan (a fairly recent discovery) display a teaching very far removed from conventional Buddhist discourse.

In compiling this collection I ended up spending a lot of time reading the works of contemporary scholars of the history of the Zen movement (not something I usually do). As someone focused on the practice of awakening, I like to devote my attentions to the awareness of embodied presence, and I don't recommend spending a lot of time reading scholarly theory (or reading anything, really). But I've found that some of the explorations and conclusions of these scholarly works have something very important to teach contemporary spiritual practice communities - namely, don't put too much stock in your "authentic lineage" and other historical legitimacy myths.

One of the main interests right now in Zen scholarship is in uncovering the extent to which political, social, and cultural forces, generally involving mundane and disappointingly familiar human traits, helped to form some of the orthodox ideology of the Zen movement.

Primary among these forces was the competition for the attentions and financial patronage of the rulers and aristocracy. This clearly had a deep influence on how Zen teachers and writers decided to portray their teaching styles and affiliations – emphasizing those aspects that would flatter, distinguish, or in some way support the political motives of their patrons. Cooperating with the policies and interests of the ruling class was one obvious way to win favor, and the rhetoric of the aloofness of the spiritual master from political affairs is revealed in many cases to be just a mirage. We might use these historical revelations to reflect on our situation today - how much do we let concerns of personal or

institutional financial security influence the content of our own spiritual practice and teachings?

Out of the competitive search for patronage comes the splitting into insular groups that vie for the limited resources and recognition offered by the elite, and we can see an increasing division of the Zen movement into separate schools during the late Tang and early Song. Bolstering the legitimacy of your clan through claims of an authentic ancestral lineage was a popular way to help advance the interests of your group.

It is well known today that the traditional Zen lineage scheme that traces the continuity of a unique teaching from the historical Buddha through to the Chinese founders of the Zen movement was simply a fabrication of Tang China. But it is less well known that there is also little evidence for the claimed continuation of that lineage - one that would link these founders (Bodhidharma, Huike, or Daoxin / Hongren) to each other, or to the so-called “Sixth Ancestor” Huineng, or from him to the influential masters Mazu and Shitou. During the actual lives of the classical masters of the Tang, there is really not much evidence even for any institution of “Dharma Transmission,” at least as we now understand it - as a bestowal of entitlement, and as an exclusive bond between master and disciple. Instead students frequently traveled freely between many teachers, learning from them all, and became teachers themselves when they were recognized by students (and/or patrons) as having something to teach. The obsession with lineage affiliation and certification seems to have been a phenomena mostly of the Song Dynasty, as the Zen movement began to rise as a powerful political and social institution, and each group sought advantage to increase its prestige. (This obsession was continued, and perhaps even exaggerated, by the influential master Dogen when transplanting his version of Zen into Japan). Clearly the strategy of lineage solidarity also has strong roots in Confucian family and ancestor identity, a particular cultural attitude quite foreign to what we have in the contemporary west, and of very questionable value in our modern context. All of this should make us question how much of this fascination with group, institution, lineage, and certification we still maintain in contemporary western Zen communities, and to what effect

on our practice, which is supposedly directed toward liberating, inclusive, and compassionate presence.

If one were to conclude from these scholarly investigations, however, that the image of a spiritual tradition truly free from ambition, greed, and competition can only be a fantasy - that, I think, would be a sad mistake. Even if our spiritual heroes from the literature prove not as pure as we had thought, there is still the undeniable urge in all our hearts toward a way free of the burden of craving, struggling, and fear.

It should really not surprise us that the most famous teachers, on close examination, often fail to live up to the highest standards of immunity to cultural pressures – after all, to become famous usually requires some compromise. But in the often heard refrain found throughout the literary Zen tradition praising the life of simplicity, of submersion in the mountain wilderness, of leaving behind the deluded affairs of the dusty world and realizing the inherent peace of present awareness, we find a light that still can lead and inspire. For every historical icon who might fail to live up to the highest expectations of non-worldliness, there are likely many quiet and unknown practitioners outside the notice of the books who were following the way wholeheartedly with little concern for name and fame. Their practice went unrecorded, but it remains a practice reverberating together with all beings. And their spirit is alive in the words below, regardless of the names we fix to those words.

Aware of the contrast between the political realm of human ambitions on the one hand, and the natural world beyond ideas on the other, as well as the intriguing play between them, we can read these dialogues in a new light. Of course it's exciting to experience the liberation - the sudden release of mental burden - that these teaching words can sometimes open for us. But more than that, if we observe the daily life-ways and values hinted at throughout these accounts, we find a guide for how liberating insight can function in the real world to help all beings. The balance between retreat and worldly engagement is a meticulous dance, and the dancers in this collection are often skilled and elegant models. With the present beleaguered state of our planet, and all its creatures, it's more crucial than ever that we become adept at

this dance, rediscovering the potential of the true simplicity of life at the core of these teachings, and at the center of our own hearts.

Now I'm done with this project, and glad to be. I hope someone finds this collection useful. I'm going to go outside, into the dawn rain.

Part One: Encounter Dialogues

Once at Vulture Peak in India, before an assembly of innumerable beings gathered to hear the teaching, the World-Honored One, Sakyamuni Buddha, simply held up a flower in silence. The venerable yogin Mahakasyapa broke into a smile. The Buddha then said, "I have the treasury of the eye of truth, the wondrous mind of nirvana, which I now entrust to Mahakasyapa. Spread it though the future, never letting it die out."

Langye Huijue said:

Mahakasyapa did not know the World-Honored One's samadhi.

Ananda did not know Mahakasyapa's samadhi. Sanavasin did not know

Ananda's samadhi. Up to now, although I have samadhi, you do not know it.

Eihei Dogen said:

The World-Honored One did not know the World-Honored One's samadhi.

Mahakasyapa did not know Mahakasyapa's samadhi.

Ananda did not know Ananda's samadhi. Sanavasin did not know samadhi. I have samadhi, but I do not know it.

Sanavasin's

You have samadhi but you do not know it. (EK 4-278)

Dogen also said:

Mahakasyapa's face breaking into a smile has not yet ceased. (EK 4-334)

Bodhidharma

Great Master Bodhidharma came from South India to China. He settled on Mt. Song in the Luoyang region, living in a cave beneath

Shaoshi Peak. Eventually a small group of meditation practitioners began to gather around him, including the monk Sengfu (or Daofu) and later the monk Huike.

When Huike first came to Bodhidharma he was already a seasoned monk with years of practice and study behind him. But he was still dissatisfied. He asked the master, "My mind is not yet at peace. Can the teacher bring my mind to peace?"

Bodhidharma said, "Bring me your mind and I will set it at peace."

After a pause Huike said, "Seeking my mind, I cannot grasp it anywhere."

Bodhidharma, "There, I have brought your mind to peace."

Huike had a deep realization.

After nine years on Mt. Song, Bodhidharma wanted to move on. With the construction of Shaolin Temple nearby, a new government-supported Buddhist community was moving in.

Calling together his disciples he said, "The time to leave here is at hand. Each of you say something to demonstrate your understanding."

The senior disciple Dao Fu (Seng Fu) said, "As I see it, it is not bound by words or phrases, nor is it separate from words and phrases. This is the function of the Way."

Bodhidharma said, "You have attained my skin."

The nun Zong Chi said, "According to my understanding it is like a glorious glimpse of the realm of Akshobhya Buddha* Seen once, it need not be seen again."

Bodhidharma said, "You have attained my flesh."

A disciple named Dao Yu said, "The four elements are all empty and the five components of awareness are without actual existence. As I see it, there is not a single phenomena to be grasped."

Bodhidharma said, "You have attained my bones."

Thereupon Huike bowed and stood up straight.

Bodhidharma said, "You have attained my marrow."

Dogen said,

Later people believe that these are shallow and deep levels,
but this is not the ancestor's meaning.
"You have my skin" is like speaking of lanterns and standing pillars.
"You have my flesh" is like saying, "This very mind is Buddha."
"You have my bones" is like speaking of the mountains, rivers, and the great earth.
"You have my marrow" is like twirling a flower and blinking the eyes.
There is no shallow or deep, superior or inferior.
If you can see like this, then you see the Ancestral Teacher,
you see the Second Ancestor, and you can receive transmission of the robe and bowl.
The power of the awakened ancestor's Dharma Wheel is great, turning
the entire universe and turning each atom.
Even though the robe and bowl were transmitted into Huike's hands,
the truth is heard by and universally pervades every man and woman.

*Akshobhya means immovable, eternally steadfast, constant

After leaving the Luoyang area, Bodhidharma and at least some of his disciples headed south and east toward the lower Yangtze River region. The senior monk Sengfu came to settle at Resolution Forest Monastery on Bell Mountain bordering the city of Nanjing. He lived a simple life with few possessions in this quiet, wooded setting, and refused invitations to the local court (just walking distance away), even when the regional emperor Liang Wu Di took power, and proved an enthusiastic supporter of Buddhist monasticism and practice. Despite Sengfu's refusals, the emperor had deep respect for him, and eventually built a residence for him at Opening Virtue Monastery, where Sengfu spent his last years.

The whereabouts of Master Bodhidharma during this time are not clear, but at one point he was called before Emperor Wu, perhaps as he was recognized as the master of the locally revered monk Sengfu. The emperor, one of the most devout Buddhists of all Chinese rulers, and a great supporter and builder of monasteries, asked the master, "With all the temples I've built and monk ordinations I've sponsored, what merit is there?"

Bodhidharma said, "No merit."

The emperor said, "Then what do you say is the deepest understanding of the sacred truth?"

Bodhidharma said, "Vast emptiness, nothing sacred."

The emperor demanded, "Who are you to say that before me?!"

Bodhidharma exclaimed, "Don't know!"

The emperor didn't understand and Bodhidharma soon left and returned to the north. No one knows what became of him.

(The above reworking of the progression of Bodhidharma's life, which departs from the traditional account, is based on an idea of Andy Ferguson's which is more consistent with the scant historical details we have, and is more plausible, than the common story).

Dazu Huike

Master Huike was from Wulao City in northern Henan Province. He entered monastic life at Dragon Gate Monastery on Fragrant Mountain in Luoyang. There he studied under a Zen* Master named Baojing.

When he learned about Master Bodhidharma, he went to meet him on Mt. Song, and stayed as his disciple for six years. After leaving the Luoyang region with his teacher and heading southeast toward the lower Yangtze, Huike settled on his own on Priest of the Sky (Sikong) Mountain (in modern Anhui province) and practiced there for many years.

One day on the mountain Master Huike met a lay practitioner who had a skin disease. The layman asked the master, "This disciple's body is bound up in illness. Master, please help me repent for my sins."

The master said, "Bring me your sins and I will absolve them for you."

After a pause the layman said, "Looking for my sins, I can't find them anywhere."

The ancestor said, "There, I have absolved your sins. From now on live in reliance on your true nature, on practice, and on spiritual community."

Master Huike ordained the layman and gave him the name Sengcan. His illness subsided, and he later became the master's most famous disciple.

Master Huike eventually traveled north and west to the new capital of the Eastern Wei Dynasty called Ye (in modern Hebei Province). There he taught publicly and gained a circle of devoted followers. He also intermingled with lay society, including visits to wine-houses and brothels. He was sometimes seen living as a household servant. Once he gave a talk before the front gate of a temple while another lecture was going on inside, and a large crowd was drawn to hear him. He soon found himself resented and criticized by other religious teachers, and near the end of his life was condemned and persecuted by the local government. Later masters called it the “payment of a karmic debt” and Master Huike was said to bear his adversity with profound equanimity.

* Throughout this collection I use the term “Zen” to refer to the movement within Chinese Buddhism that focused on meditation practice and emphasized direct, non-conceptual teaching. The written character for this tradition is pronounced “Chan” in mandarin Chinese. It is pronounced “Zen” in Japanese, and is known by that pronunciation throughout most of the non-Chinese world. That’s one reason I use it. But another reason is that, according to the translator and scholar Bill Porter, in the Jiangxi/Hunan area of China where much of this tradition evolved, the character is actually pronounced like something very close to “Zen.”

And a note about this “Zen Master Baojing” - the fact that he is described as a Zen master, although he was a contemporary of Bodhidharma, (who is usually described as the founder of “Zen”), points to the originally wide and liberal understanding of the Zen tradition as extending beyond any rigid sectarian lineages or histories.

Dayi Daoxin (580-651) & Daman Hongren (602-675)

Master Jianzhi Sengcan, the disciple of Master Huike, lived a life of wandering in the mountains. At one of his retreats in the “Hidden Mountains” (the Chienshan range), a fourteen-year-old novice named Daoxin once came to him seeking the teaching. Making prostrations

the novice said, “I entreat the master, with your compassion, to teach me the truth-gate that provides release and liberation.”

The master said, “Who has bound you?”

The novice said, “Nobody bound me.”

The master said, “Then why are you seeking liberation?”

Daoxin, hearing these words, experienced a great awakening. He then stayed with the master as a disciple for nine years.

Dogen's verse:

A phoenix chick is born from a phoenix, but they are not the same.

A dragon gives birth to a dragon child, but they are not separate.

If you want to know the meaning of a wheel freely spinning,

Only someone turning somersaults can show you.

After leaving Master Sengcan, Daoxin spent ten years at Great Woods Monastery on Hermitage Mountain (Lushan) in northern Jiangxi. This monastery was a famous center of learning for the Tiantai School, and for the study of the Prajna Paramita scriptures, both of which likely influenced Daoxin's practice and teaching.

Eventually Master Daoxin was invited to teach in the Huangmei (Yellow Plum) region just north of the Yangtze in Hubei. He established and led a Zen training center at Secluded Abode Temple on Twin Peaks Mountain there for almost thirty years.

Up until that time, the newly emerging Zen movement was propagated amongst a small number of forest yogins and wandering mendicants. Daoxin helped give Zen teaching and practice a more stable and centralized home in a monastic community. The Lankavatara Sutra was already influential in Zen circles, and Daoxin added an emphasis on the Prajna Paramita scriptures, particularly the Heart and Diamond Sutras. Master Daoxin was also known as a skilled practitioner of traditional medicine and healing arts.

Upon Master Daoxin's death, he was succeeded by his most important disciple, Daman Hongren, a native of the region who had been with Daoxin from the beginning. Master Hongren continued Daoxin's work of establishing a monastic community focused

exclusively on the study and practice of Zen. As the reputation of the master and community spread, the population greatly increased and Hongren started another center nine miles east at Fengmaoshan, which also came to be known as “East Mountain” (Dongshan). His community was known as the “East Mountain School” and out of this group came many prominent masters who spread the Zen movement throughout China including Masters Shenxiu, Hui'an, and Huineng.

Niutou Farong (594-657) & The Oxhead School

Master Niutou Farong came from Yanling in Runzhou (Jiangxi). While still a teenager he became well versed in Confucian classics, as well as Daoist ritual and philosophy, and traditional medicine. Upon reading the *Prajna Paramita* scriptures he had a deep realization and turned his attention to Buddhist teaching. He went to study with a master of the “Three Treatises” (Sanlun) school on Thatch Mountain and soon received ordination from him (The Sanlun school focused on the Madhyamaka, or “Middle Way”, philosophy from India). Later, Farong went to live in a cave on Ox Head (Niutou) Mountain south of Hangzhou. His reputation for devoted practice began to spread, and, according to legend, he was once visited by Master Daoxin, who came to check out his understanding.

Master Daoxin found Farong sitting outside his cave hermitage near Secluded Perch Temple. Farong remained sitting perfectly still, taking no notice of the master even as he came up beside him. Daoxin asked, “What are you doing?”

Farong said, “Concentrating on mind.”

Daoxin asked, “Who is it who concentrates? And what is mind?”

Farong was stuck and couldn't answer. He got up and paid respects to the master with a deep bow. As the two made their acquaintances and began to talk, a tiger and a wolf, wild friends of

Farong, emerged from the woods. Daoxin raised his arms and gasped. Farong said, “Are you still like that?”

Daoxin said, “Like what?”

Farong was silent.

Daoxin went over to the rock on which Farong had first been sitting and scratched the character

“Buddha” with a stone. Farong raised his arms and gasped.

Daoxin said, “Are you still like that?”

Farong said nothing. Then, after a pause, he asked the master to explain the meaning. Master Daoxin gave a teaching (see Part 2 – Discourses) and Farong experienced a clarity that resolved his remaining doubts, and brought his understanding to maturation.

It was said that before Niutou Farong met Master Daoxin, birds would visit his hermitage and drop flowers on him. After his meeting with the master, this never happened again.

Once a monk asked the later Master Nanquan, “Before Niutou Farong met Master Daoxin, why did hundreds of birds bring flowers in their beaks and offer

them to him?”

Nanquan said, “Step by step Niutou climbed the buddha-ladder.”

The monk then asked, “Why didn’t the birds offer flowers after Niutou met Master Daoxin?”

Nanquan said, “Even if he hadn’t climbed the buddha-ladder, he’s still on Teacher Wang’s (Nanquan’s) single road.”

Once a monk asked Master Deshan Yuanmi (a disciple of Yunmen), “How was it before Niutou met Master Daoxin?”

Yuanmi said, “In the autumn, yellow leaves fall.”

The monk asked, “How was it after he met him?”

Yuanmi said, “In spring, green grass grows of itself.”

Farong remained on Oxhead Mountain and, as students sought him out, he began to teach. Several generations later the practice community on this mountain, which traced its inspiration back to Farong, became known as the “Oxhead School” of Zen, and had a strong influence on the wider Zen movement.

In the eighth century an Oxhead School teacher named Daoqin (or Faqin) established a practice center on Mt. Jing in the same Hangzhou region as Oxhead Mountain. Many students gathered there to study with him, including the monks Daowu and Tianran, to whom he was an important early influence. Both these students later went on to study with the great masters Shitou and Mazu, and eventually became influential teachers themselves. Master Mazu was known to have corresponded with Master Daoqin, and most likely recommended visiting Daoqin's place to some of his students.

Another important Oxhead teacher was a Dharma brother of Daoqin's named Wuxing Fahai. He is thought by some scholars to have been the real author of the famous "Scripture from the Teaching-Platform of the Sixth Ancestor" that was traditionally attributed to Dajian Huineng, and contains both Huineng's supposed teaching and his legendary autobiography.

A famous disciple of Master Daoqin's was the hermit-monk Daolin. He was said to practice sitting meditation high in the branches of an evergreen tree, and thus earned the nickname "Master Bird's Nest." For a while the well-known poet and government official Bo Juyi was his student, and once he came to visit the master at his tree-sit. Bo asked, "Master, isn't it dangerous up there?"

The master replied, "Isn't your position more dangerous?"

Later Bo asked, "What is the essence of the teaching?"

The master replied, "Never do any evil, always do good, and purify the mind."

Bo said, "Yes, but any child of three knows enough to say that."

The master said, "A three-year-old can say it, but a man of eighty still doesn't practice it."

Songshan Hui'an (582-709)

Master Hui'an (also known as Lao'an) was from Jingzhou in Hubei Province. As a young man he became a monk without government

sanction or official connection to a monastery, and during a government crackdown against such ordinations he fled to the forests and began a life of wandering in the mountains. During a period of food shortages associated with a major canal construction project, Hui'an, still in his twenties, began to collect extra food to distribute to the needy. From this work his reputation began to grow, and eventually he was invited to receive honors at the royal court. Hui'an turned down the offer, and instead returned to a life of backcountry retreat. He entered the Heng Mountains in Hunan and focused on meditation there for many years.

Eventually, already in his forties or fifties, he decided to investigate the growing Zen community at Huangmei, and arrived there at the end of Master Daoxin's life. Staying on to study with Master Hongren, Hui'an's understanding and practice came to maturation, and he became recognized as a prominent teacher of the "East Mountain" School.

When Hui'an was again invited to court for honors, he again refused, and, like before, decided to drop out of view by returning to the wandering yogi life in the mountains. He first went to live in a cave retreat on Zhongnan Mountain south of Chang'an for several years, and then moved to a hut in the misty mountains of Huatai near Luoyang.

By imperial edict a monastery was built near his hut for Hui'an to lead, but the aging master soon gave up the post and instead resumed his wandering. After first spending some time at the famous Jade Spring Monastery in Jingzhou, where his now well-known "East Mountain School" colleague Shenxiu was teaching, Master Hui'an finally settled on Mt. Song and began to teach at Gathering Virtue (Huishan) Monastery.

During this time the Empress Wu Zetian had ascended to power, and she proved an enthusiastic supporter of the many disciples of Master Hongren who were spreading the East Mountain School teachings of Zen. As Master Hui'an was one of the senior teachers of this circle, he was once again invited for honors at court, and finally the master relented.

While staying at the royal palace, Master Hui'an was offered a bath by the Empress to be administered by attractive female attendants.

Unperturbed and with complete composure, Hui'an went about enjoying his bath. The empress (perhaps watching) was deeply impressed, and she was said to remark, "Only through seeing him enter the water can you learn of the existence of a superior man."

Another time at the court, the empress requested an audience with Master Hui'an during which she asked him his age. The master replied, "I don't remember."

The empress said, "Really? How could that be?"

The master said, "This body is subject to birth and death in cycles without beginning or end. What is the point of noting progress in years? Awareness flows like water - grasping at the arising and disappearing of bubbles is just deluded thinking. Life from birth to death is just the same - why mark it with months or years?" The empress had an understanding and bowed in gratitude.

Master Hui'an returned to Mt. Song and lived out the last few years of his long life at Shaolin Monastery. He was said to have lived to the extraordinary age of 128. Days before his passing he asked his disciples to take care of his body after death by simply leaving it in the forest and entrusting it to nature.

Hui'an's deep reverence for nature and the hermit life (also notable in the Oxhead School), and his lifestyle of freedom and independence from social regulation, left a strong influence on his students. When Hui'an's disciple Fuxian Renjian was called before Empress Wu, he refused to speak, instead only presenting her with a collection of his poems, and then refusing the gifts she offered in return. One of the poems had the line, "Today I entrust all to destiny, cavorting freely," from which came his nickname Tengteng ("Freely Cavorting").

Another of Hui'an's disciples, Jingzang, spent more than ten years with his teacher until the master's death, and then traveled south to study with Hui'an's lesser-known colleague Huineng, who had also studied with Master Hongren at the East Mountain School. After several years with Master Huineng, Jingzang returned north, eventually settling back on Mt. Song at a sub-temple of Gathering Virtue Monastery that had been built as a memorial to Master Hui'an. Here he eventually began to teach. Despite his time spent with Huineng, who would later become legendary, Jingzang remained dedicated to the memory of his original teacher Hui'an.

A monk named Huairang was another student of Hui'an's who, perhaps on the master's advice, also traveled south to study with Huineng. Huairang, however, remained in the south after his time with Huineng, and became an important figure in the later history of Zen as the teacher of the influential Master Mazu.

Dajian Huineng (638-713)

Master Dajian Huineng was from the far southern city of Guangzhou. Unlike most teachers in the Zen tradition, he was said to be from a poor family, and also was quite possibly a member of the Hmong, or Miao, ethnic minority. His father had died when he was a small child, and as a youth he collected firewood from the hills and sold it to support his mother and himself.

One day in the market he happened to hear a monk reciting the Diamond Sutra, and when he heard the line, "A Bodhisattva should arouse awareness without dwelling on anything," he had a sudden realization of his true self. Inspired to practice, he asked the monk where he might go to deepen his understanding, and the monk told him of his teacher Master Hongren in Huangmei. The young man made some arrangement for the welfare of his mother, perhaps with the aid of this monk or another local Buddhist supporter, and soon set off northward for Huangmei.

When he arrived at the East Mountain Monastery and asked for the master's instruction, he was simply put to work with the field laborers winnowing rice (as he was from a poor class, not a monk, and perhaps an ethnic minority). Several months later, he heard that Master Hongren had invited all the monks of the monastery to try composing a verse that would show their understanding of the Way of Awakening.

Hearing that the head monk had written a verse on a temple wall, the young wood-seller, being illiterate, asked a friendly monk to read him what the head monk had written. The head monk's verse read:

The body is the Bodhi Tree,
the mind is the stand for a bright mirror-
at all times diligently polish
to remain untainted by dust.

Huineng then asked the monk to help him write his own verse on the wall:

Bodhi has no tree,
nor is there a stand for the mirror.
Our true nature is forever pure,
so where can dust gather?

When Master Hongren read the first verse, he praised the head monk's sentiments as useful advice for practice. When he read the young man's verse he pointed out to those present that, "This is still not complete understanding." Later that night, however, he met privately with the young Huineng, expressed approval for his insight, and gave him further teaching. He then instructed the young man to leave the monastery to avoid contention, and practice in seclusion. Thus Huineng went to live with hunters and woodsmen in the forest, as well as workers and merchants in towns, and remained in obscurity for sixteen years.

Another, later version of Huineng's famous poem has a different third line. It changes the positive, Yogacara-like view of the oldest surviving version above, to a more negating, Madhyamaka-like view:

Bodhi has no tree,
nor is there a stand for the mirror.
Originally there is not a single thing,
so where can dust gather?

One day many years later in the south of China, the priest Yinzong, who had studied with Master Hongren, was giving a lecture on the Mahaparinirvana Scripture at Dharma Uprising Monastery. During the talk a storm began brewing and the wind grew strong. Seeing the monastery banner flapping in the wind, a monk asked if it was the wind that was moving, or the flag. One monk said "It's the wind that moves," and another said, "It's the flag that moves." The two stuck to their viewpoints and asked Yinzong to say who was right. But Yinzong was unable to resolve it. Huineng, who had been camping out under the eaves of the temple, offered to help.

"Neither the wind nor the flag is moving," he said.

"Then what is it that is moving?" asked Yinzong.

"Your mind is moving," said Huineng.

In a later time the nun Miaoxin said:

"It is neither the wind nor the flag nor the mind that is moving."

Yinzong soon ordained Huineng as a monk, and then became his disciple. Huineng finally began to teach at Precious Woods Monastery at Cao Creek (Caoxi), east of the town of Shaozhou in the southern province of Guangdong. (The Monastery is today called Nanhua - "Southern Blossom").

During his lifetime Master Huineng never attracted national attention, but after his passing several of his students became influential in powerful political circles, including the royal court. His student Heze Shenhui (684-758) made impassioned claims for the superiority of Huineng's teachings over other Zen lineages at a famous monastic

gathering in 732. Attracting the attention of Emperor Suzong, Shenhui was invited to court as a religious advisor, and eventually his view become orthodoxy in Zen's legendary history.

Two other students of Master Huineng also attracted imperial attention, and were installed as royal advisors in the capital. The more famous was Master Nanyang Huizhong, whose story is included below.

The other was Master Sikong Benjing (667-761), a teacher who originally lived on “Priest of Empty Sky” Mountain (Sikongshan) in Anhui Province.

Master Sikong Benjing once said, “If you want to be a buddha - mind itself is buddha.

If you want to know about the way - no-mind is the way.”

Master Sikong's teaching of “mind itself” and “no-mind” was said to have attracted the attention of Emperor Xuanzong, and they later became famous phrases in the teaching of Master Mazu Daoyi.

Qingyuan Xingsi (660-740)

There is little recorded about the early life of Master Xingsi of Qingyuan Mountain. He was from central Jiangxi, and like many monks he left home at a young age to become a novice. We are told that whenever there was a gathering that discussed the Way, he always remained silent. At some point he traveled south to study with Master Huineng at Caoxi.

Once Xingsi asked Master Huineng, “What is the practice that does not fall into stages?”

The master said, “What have you been doing?”

Xingsi said, “I don't even practice the four noble truths.”

The master said, “What stages have you fallen into?”

Xingsi said, “Without even studying the noble truths, what stages could I have fallen into?”

The master said, “Just so, just so. You should maintain it well.”

After studying with Master Huineng, Xingsi returned to his native region and settled at Quite Abode (Jingju) Monastery on Green Origin (Qingyuan) Mountain in Luling (modern Ji'an in Jiangxi Province).

When the monk Xiqian came to study with Master Qingyuan Xingsi, the master asked him, "Where have you come from?"

Xiqian said, "From Caoxi."

The master held up his whisk and said, "Do they have this in Caoxi?"

Xiqian said, "Not in Caoxi, nor even in India."

The master said, "You haven't been to India, have you?"

Xiqian said, "If I had been there, it would have been there."

The master said, "If you haven't been there, how can you say that? Try again!"

Xiqian said, "Master, you should say something. Don't rely on your disciple for all of it."

The master said, "It's not that I mind saying something, but I fear that there will be no one to carry on my practice."

(Xiqian later became the most illustrious disciple of Master Qingyuan)

The monk Heze Shenhui once came to visit Master Qingyuan.

The master asked, "Where have you come from?"

Shenhui said, "From Caoxi."

The master asked, "What is the essential doctrine of Caoxi?"

Shenhui suddenly stood up straight.

The master said, "So, you're still just carrying around common clay tiles."

Shenhui asked, "Does the master have any gold here to give people?"

The master said, "I don't have any. Where would you go to find some?"

Shenhui couldn't answer.

Once a monk asked Qingyuan, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from India?”

The master said, “It's just like this!”

The monk asked further, “What else do you have to teach these days?”

The master said, “Come closer.”

The monk moved closer.

The master said, “Keep this in mind.”

Nanyue Huairang (677-744)

Master Huairang of Nanyue first left home at the age of fifteen to become a novice. He later received full ordination at Jade Spring Monastery in Jingzhou (Hubei). Huairang stayed on for some time at this prominent monastic center, which was famous for the study of religious discipline (vinaya) and the philosophy of the Tiantai School.

At this time Zen practice was also being taught there by Master Shenxiu, one of the most well-known disciples of Master Hongren of the East Mountain School. Not satisfied with the teaching he found there, Huairang heard about the aging Master Hui'an, an older colleague of Shenxiu, and he traveled to Mt. Song to study with him. In this new community Huairang's practice began to mature, but after some time he grew interested in checking out other teachers. Learning about Master Huineng, perhaps from Master Hui'an himself, Huairang decided to travel south and investigate the teaching and community at Caoxi.

When Huairang first arrived, Master Huineng asked, “Where did you come from?”

Huairang said, “From Mt. Song.”

The master asked, “What is it that has come?”

Huairang was stuck and couldn't answer. He then decided to stay and practice there.

Eight years later Huairang one day said to Master Huineng, “Now I have an understanding.”

The master asked, “What is it?”

Huairang said, “To say or do anything misses the mark.”

The master asked further, “Then is there any real practice to do, or awakening to experience?”

Huairang said, “It's not that there isn't practice and awakening, it's just that they can't be defiled.”

The master said, “Just this that can't be defiled is what is upheld and sustained by all the awakened ones. You are like this, I am like this, all the ancestors in India were like this.”

After serving Master Huineng for several more years, Huairang traveled northwest and settled on South Peak (Nanyue) in the sacred Heng Mountain region of Hunan. Many spiritual practitioners, both Daoist and Buddhist, had long gathered in these hills and built their huts and temples. Here Huairang became the master of Nanyue Monastery, and on this mountain he would meet both of the monks who would later become the two most influential masters in the development and spreading of the Zen tradition in Tang Dynasty China. To one, Mazu Daoyi, he would become an important teacher, and to the other, Shitou Xiqian, he was most likely at least a supporter and friend.

Nearby Master Nanyue Huairang's temple on South Peak, the young monk Daoyi had built a hermitage and was gaining a reputation as a diligent meditation practitioner. Master Nanyue went to visit him to examine his understanding, and found him sitting outside near his hermitage. The master asked him, “What does your worthiness intend to accomplish by sitting in meditation?”

Daoyi said, “I intend to become an awakened one.”

The master then picked up a piece of ceramic roofing tile from the ground and began grinding it on a rock.

Daoyi asked, “What are you doing?”

The master said, “I’m polishing this tile to make a mirror.”

Daoyi asked, “How are you going to make a mirror by polishing a tile on a rock?”

The master said, “How are you going to make an awakened one by sitting in meditation?”

Daoyi was taken aback. After a pause he asked, “What is the correct way?”

The master said, “Think about driving an ox-cart. When it stops moving do you whip the cart or the ox?”

Daoyi didn’t answer.

Then Master Nanyue said, “Is your sitting an attempt to practice Zen, or to be an awakened one? If you really understand what Zen-sitting is, you’d know that Zen is not about sitting or lying down. If you want to know the sitting of an awakened one, then you must understand that awakening has no fixed form. In this ephemeral, changing world, you should give up both grasping and rejecting. If you sit in order to become awakened, you destroy awakening. If you’re attached to the form of sitting, then you haven’t yet reached the essential understanding.

When Daoyi heard this, he felt like he had drunk sweet nectar.

Dogen said:

Polishing a tile to make a mirror is diligent effort.

and

Polishing a tile to make a mirror is our reward for accumulating merit and virtue.

He also said:

Instead of hitting the ox, you should hit the cart.

and

When one cart is hit, many carts go quickly.

Once a monk asked Master Nanyue, “If a bronze mirror is melted down and cast into an image, where does the bright reflection go?”

The master said, “Venerable, your face when you were a child and hadn't yet left home – where has it gone?”

The monk said nothing. Then after a pause he asked, “After the image is completed, how come it doesn't reflect and illuminate any more?”

The master said, “Although it doesn't appear to reflect and illuminate, it's not deceiving you.”

Nanyang Huizhong (676-776)

Little is recorded about the early life of Master Nanyang Huizhong, but he was a student of Master Huineng, and after leaving Caoxi he settled in the Nanyang region of Hunan and remained there for forty years, becoming a prominent teacher.

Once a monk asked Master Nanyang, “What is the original body of the primordial Awakened One?”

The master said, “Bring me the water jar.” The monk went and got the water jar. Then the master said, “Now put it back where it was.” The monk put it back and then asked the same question again.

The master said, “The old awakened one has been gone for a long time.”

As Master Nanyang's reputation spread, he was eventually summoned to the royal court in Chang'an by the Tang Emperor Suzong. There he was installed as the “National Teacher” and served as spiritual mentor to two successive emperors.

Once the emperor asked Master Nanyang, “What is a person whose 'ten bodies' are complete?”

The master stood up and said, “Do you understand?”

The emperor said, “No, I don't.”

The master said, “Your majesty, please pass the water jar.”

Once a spiritual teacher from India (later remembered as “Big Ears”) who was said to have the ability to read minds, was visiting Chang'an and was invited to the court. Emperor Suzong called on Master Nanyang to test the visitor's powers. Nanyang asked the psychic, “Where do you say I am right now in my thoughts?”

The psychic said, “Although the master is a teacher of the nation, he has gone to watch boat races on the West River.”

Nanyang asked again, “Now where do you say I am?”

The psychic said, “Although the master is a teacher of the nation, he has gone to Tianjin Bridge and is watching monkeys playing.”

Then Master Nanyang asked a third time, “Now where do you say I am?”

This time the psychic said nothing.

Nanyang shouted, “You wild fox–spirit! Where is your mind-reading power now?”

A monk once asked the later Master Zhaozhou where Master Nanyang was the third time. Zhaozhou said, “He was on the psychic's nose.”

Another time a monk asked the master Xuansha why, if Nanyang was on the psychic's nose, he couldn't be seen. Xuansha said, “Exactly because he was so close.” (Master Haihui Shouduan said, “Nanyang was inside the psychic's eyeball.”) Xuansha also questioned, “What did the psychic really see the first two times?”

Dogen said:

On behalf of the psychic (when questioned by Nanyang) I would say, “This autumn morning the frost is cold. I humbly wish that the teacher's health and activities will be filled with blessings.”

Dogen also said:

Do you want to understand the awakened ancestors' supernatural abilities? The manifestation of spiritual powers is bringing a basin of water and making tea.

Master Nanyang lived a long life of a hundred years, during which several generations of aspiring teachers came to visit him to check their understanding. He was uncompromising in his responses:

When the monk Baoche came to visit Master Nanyang, the monk circled the teacher's seat three times, then struck his staff on the ground and stood there upright. The master said, "You are thus. I also am thus."

Baoche struck his staff on the ground again.

The master said, "Get out of here, you wild fox-spirit!"

When Master Nanyang was nearing death, the Emperor Daizong asked him, "After you have gone, how should your disciple memorialize you?"

The master said, "Please build me a seamless monument."

After a long silence he asked the emperor, "Do you understand?"

The emperor said, "No."

The master said, "After I'm gone my disciple Yingzhen can help you. Please ask him about it."

Shitou Xiqian (700-790)

Great Master Shitou Xiqian grew up near Guangzhou in the far south. As a small child he visited a Buddhist temple with his mother, who brought him in front of the Buddha image, told him to bow down, and said, "This is Buddha." After he bowed, the child looked at the image for awhile and then said, "This is only a human being, If he is called a Buddha, then I want to be one too."

In his village there were animal sacrifices performed to appease demons, and as a boy the master would go into the woods, destroy the ceremonial altars, free the animals, and drive them away. This went on for several years and the village elders were never able to stop him.

At only thirteen years old Xiqian traveled to Caoxi and became a novice under Master Huineng. Soon after the master passed away. Most likely Xiqian then stayed in the area, and was eventually ordained at the relatively late age of 28 at the famous Luofu Mountain in Guangzhou. He then traveled north to study with Master Qingyuan Xingsi, the disciple of Huineng, in central Jiangxi..

One version of his first meeting with Master Qingyuan goes like this:

The master asked, "Where have you come from?"

Xiqian said, "From Caoxi."

The master asked, "What did you bring with you?"

Xiqian said, "That which had never been lost even before I went to Caoxi."

The master said, "Then why did you go there at all?"

Xiqian said, "If I hadn't gone there, how could I have realized that it had never been lost?"

The master approved.

Then Xiqian asked him, "Did you know the master of Caoxi?"

The master said, "Do you know me now or not?"

Xiqian said, "Though I might know you, how can I fully realize it?"

The master then welcomed Xiqian into the community.

Xiqian had a profound awakening on reading a passage from the commentaries of Seng Zhao (374?-414), a disciple of the Indian translator Kumarajiva. The passage read: "The ultimate self is empty and void. Though it lacks form, the myriad things are all of its making. One who realizes that the myriad things are one's own self is no different from the sages."

One day Master Qingyuan said to Xiqian, "Everyone's saying that something's going on in Lingnan." (the "southern mountains", where the Zen movement was growing).

Xiqian replied, "There is someone who doesn't say that something's going on in Lingnan."

The master said, "If so, then where do you say all the teachings come from?"

Xiqian said, "They all come from this right here, and nothing is lacking."

The master approved.

After Master Qingyuan's passing, Xiqian traveled to the Southern Peak (Nanyue) in the Heng Mountain region of Hunan, and built a grass-thatched hut for himself on a stone ledge that was exposed on the side of a hill. Because of his hermitage on the rock, Xiqian soon became known as Shitou Heshang (Monk "Rocky-Top").

Having settled close to his spiritual uncle, Nanyue Huairang, the two were almost certain to have been in contact. One account (in the Ancestor's Hall Collection) records a conversation between Xiqian and Master Nanyue:

Xiqian asked, "What do we do when teachers are no longer needed, but one's understanding hasn't been recognized?"

Nanyue said, "That's a bit arrogant. How about asking something more humble?"

Xiqian said, "Even being reborn endlessly, we can't reach liberation by following others."

Master Nanyue was silent. Xiqian departed.

Later an attendant monk came and reported to Master Nanyue, "The monk who came to ask you questions recently - the one who was quite disrespectful - he's now practicing on a rock ledge to the east of here."

The master told the attendant, "Go over and tell him that a person of such strong intention would be welcome to practice here in our temple."

The attendant delivered the message, but Xiqian declined the offer.

Nanyue said, "Nobody will ever get the better of this man."

Master Nanyue later helped to arrange the building of a small temple for Xiqian near the site of his hut. Xiqian soon began to attract

students, and , known as Master Shitou, eventually became one of the most influential teachers in the Zen tradition.

Once a monk asked Master Shitou, “What's the significance of Bodhidharma's coming from India?”

The master said, “Ask the post over there.”

The monk said, “I don't understand.”

The master said, “I don't understand either.”

Once a monk named Shili asked, “What are monks supposed to do?”

Master Shitou said, “What are you asking me for?”

Shili said, “If I don't ask you, how can I find the truth?”

Shitou said, “Are you sure you've lost it?”

The monk Daowu once asked, “Who has attained the essential principle of the teacher of Caoxi?”

Master Shitou said, “The one who understands the teachings of Buddhism.”

Daowu asked, “Then have you attained it?”

The master said, “I haven't attained it.”

Daowu asked, “Why not?”

The master said, “Because I don't understand Buddhism.”

Another time Daowu asked, “What is the fundamental teaching of the Buddha Way?”

Master Shitou said, “Not attaining, not knowing – you already have it.”

Daowu asked, “Is there anything beyond this?”

The master said, “White clouds pass freely through the vast sky.”

When the monk Baotong first came to study with Master Shitou, the master asked him, “Can you show me your mind?”

Baotong replied, "That which distinguishes your words is my mind."
The master shouted and drove him away.

Later Baotong again approached the master and said, "If what I said last time isn't my mind, then what is?"

The master said, "Without raising your eyebrows or blinking your eyes, show me your mind."

Baotong said, "I don't have any particular mind to show you."

The master said, "Originally you do have a mind, so why say you don't? If you deny it, it's just lying."

At this Baotong had a realization.

Another time Baotong asked Master Shitou, "An ancient said that it's mistaken to believe in the Way, and also mistaken to believe that there isn't a Way. I ask the master to please explain."

Master Shitou said, "There's not a thing here; what do you want me to explain?"

Baotong was silent. Then the master said, "Throw away your throat, mouth, and lips and let's see what you can say."

Baotong said, "There's nothing left."

The master said, "If that's really so, then you've entered the gate."

A monk named Huilang once asked Master Shitou, "What is the awakened one?"

The master said, "You don't have awakened mind."

Huilang, dejected, said, "I'm just human. I know I run around and have all kinds of ideas."

The master said, "Active people with ideas still have awakened mind."

Huilang asked, "Then why don't I?"

The master said, "Because you're not satisfied to be just human."

Huilang had a deep realization.

The monk Changzi Kuang once returned from a pilgrimage to continue his study with Master Shitou. The master asked him, “Where have you been?”

Kuang said, “To Master Huineng's memorial shrine at Caoxi.”

The master asked, “Did visiting there bring you any merit?”

Kuang said, “I've had some insight, but I haven't been able to 'open the eyes' of the awakened one.”

The master said, “Do you want to 'open the eyes'?”

Kuang said, “Please, master, help me do so.”

The master suddenly kicked out his leg right at the monk.

Kuang had a deep realization, and made a prostration.

The master asked, “Why do you bow?”

Kuang said, “It's like a flake of snow landing on a red-hot furnace.”

The monk Lingmo once came to study with Master Shitou and said, “If you can give me one phrase of awakening I will stay; if not, I will leave.”

The master ignored him.

Lingmo shook out the sleeves of his robe, and walked away. When he got to the temple gate, the master called out, “Venerable!”

Lingmo turned his head.

The master said, “From birth till death, just this! Why are you still searching?”

Lingmo had a deep awakening.

Mazu Daoyi (709-788)

Great Master Mazu Daoyi came from Hanzhou, near Chengdu city, in the far western province of Sichuan. He entered monastic life in his teens and studied first with Master Chuji, a prominent teacher of Zen in Sichuan. Chuji was a disciple of Master Zishen, who had studied with Master Hongren of the East Mountain School at Huangmei. The young Daoyi most likely also studied with, or at least knew, the prominent

Sichuan Zen teacher Wuxiang (originally from Korea), who was an older disciple of Chuji.

Daoyi received full ordination at age twenty in his home province, and not long after he traveled to the east to meet other teachers. He first stayed at Bright Moon Mountain in Jingzhou (in present Hubei province) where he focused on meditation. Continuing his pilgrimage, he traveled south to the Heng Mountain region in Hunan and settled on South Peak. There he met Master Nanyue Huairang and became his disciple.

After several years practicing with Master Nanyue, and likely meeting Master Shitou, Daoyi left South Peak and headed east. He first settled at Buddha Footprint Grotto in Jianyang (Fujian province) and began to teach. As his family name was “Ma,” he was soon known as Master Ma, and later as Mazu (Ancestor Ma).

A monk asked, “What is the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma?”

Master Ma said, “What is the meaning of this moment?”

Master Nanyue, upon hearing that his student Daoyi had begun to teach, sent a monk to the young Master Ma's place, instructing him to wait for the master to give a talk in the Teaching Hall, and then to simply ask him, “How is it?” and bring back the response.

The monk did as he was asked, and after returning reported, “Master Ma said, 'Since leaving confusion behind many years ago, there has never been a lack of salt and soy sauce.'”

Master Nanyue approved.

The monk Huihai was among the earliest of Mazu's students who would later come to prominence as a teacher. When he first came to see Master Ma, the master asked him, “Where are you coming from?”

Huihai said, “From Great Cloud Monastery in Yuezhou.”

The master asked, “What is your intention in coming here?”

Huihai said, “I have come here to seek the teaching of Awakening.”

The master said, “Without looking at your own treasure, for what purpose are you leaving your home and wandering around? Here I do not have a single thing. What teaching are you looking for?”

Huihai bowed and asked, “What is my own treasure?”

The master said, “That which is asking me right now is your own treasure – perfectly complete, it lacks nothing. You are free to use it, why are you seeking outside?”

Upon hearing this, Huihai realized the original mind without relying on knowledge and understanding. He stayed with the master as his disciple for six years.

Later he returned to Yuezhou to care for his original teacher who was aging. When Master Ma saw his writings he said to the community, “In Yuezhou there is a great pearl; its brilliance shines freely without obstruction.” Thereafter Huihai was known as “Dazhu” (Great Pearl).

After some time Master Ma left Fujian and moved west into Jiangxi, first teaching at Xili Mountain in Linchuan (Riverview). There he met his future disciple Huizang:

One day a hunter, who disliked monks, passed by Master Ma's hermitage as he was chasing a herd of deer. The master greeted him. The hunter asked, “Has the Venerable seen a herd of deer passing by?”

The master asked, “Who are you?”

“I'm a hunter.”

“Do you know how to shoot?”

“Yes, I know.”

“How many deer can you shoot with a single arrow?”

“With a single arrow I can shoot only one.”

“You don't know how to shoot.”

“Does the Venerable know how to shoot?”

“Yes, I know.”

“How many can the Venerable shoot with a single arrow?”

“With a single arrow I can shoot the whole herd.”

The hunter paused and then said, “They all possess life; why shoot the whole herd?”

The master said, “If you know that, then why don't you shoot yourself?”

After another pause the hunter replied, “You ask me to shoot myself...I can't do that.”

The master said, “Ah, this person. All his ignorance and defilements accumulated over vast ages have today suddenly come to an end.” At that point the hunter set down his bow and arrows and cut off his hair with a knife. He was ordained as the monk Huizang with Master Ma, and went to work in the monastery kitchen. Eventually he became a teacher at Mt. Shigong.

After teaching at Linchuan for several years, Mazu moved south and headed a monastery on Gonggong Mountain in Qianzhou. There his reputation began to spread and he attracted many students including the future masters Baizhang Huaihai, Yanguan Qi'an, and Xitang Zhizang as well as the local official Pei Xu who became an important supporter and patron.

Finally Master Ma, leaving the center at Gonggong Mountain in the hands of his disciple Zhizang, moved north to Hongzhou City (present day Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi) with the rest of his senior students, when he was appointed abbot of a prominent monastery there.

This monastery had recently been renamed Open Source (Kaiyuan) by Emperor Xuanzong, and was included as part of a network of state sponsored monasteries of the same name. (Today it's known as Youmin Monastery). Here in Hongzhou Master Ma spent the last twenty years of his life teaching a large number of students. The new disciples joining him here included the future masters Nanquan Puyuan, Fenzhou Wuye, and Guizong Zhichang. Master Ma became the most famous Zen Master of his era, and the network of his students, known as the “Hongzhou School”, emerged as the most prominent force in the Tang dynasty Zen movement.

The monk Wuye came to visit Master Ma and said, “I have studied the Three Vehicles and have been able to roughly understand their meaning. But when I've heard about the teaching of the Zen school that 'mind is Buddha' – this is something that I have not yet been able to understand.”

Master Ma said, “This very mind that does not understand is it. There is no other thing.”

Wuye asked further, “What is the mind-seal that Bodhidharma has secretly transmitted from India?”

Master Ma said, “The venerable sounds rather disturbed right now. Go and come back another time.”

As Wuye was just about to step out, the master called him, “Venerable!” Wuye turned his head and the master asked, “What is it?” On hearing this Wuye experienced an awakening. He bowed to the master, who said, “This stupid fellow! What is this bowing all about?”

One day Master Ma sent out a messenger with a letter to Master Jingshan Daoqin (of the Oxhead School) in Hangzhou. In the letter was a single circle. Daoqin made one horizontal stroke within the circle, sealed the envelope again and sent it back. When Master Nanyang heard about this he said, “Teacher Daoqin is still misled by Master Ma.”

The monk Huaihai once asked the master, “What is the essential import of this school?”

The master said, “It's just the place where you let go of your body and life.”

One evening the monks Zhizang, Huaihai, and Puyuan were out viewing the moon with Master Ma. The master asked them, “At just this moment, what is it?”

Zhizang said, “A perfect offering.”

Huaihai said, “Perfect Practice.”

Puyuan shook his sleeves and walked away.

The master said, “The sutras enter the treasury (zang); Zen returns to the ocean (hai); only the universal vow (puyuan) goes beyond things.”

Dogen comments:

Making offerings, cultivating practice, shaking his sleeves and leaving;
these three people are just right to complete one full moon. (EK 1, 13)

Toward the end of his life Master Ma left Open Source Monastery to live at Writing Pool Temple on the quiet and secluded Stone Gate Mountain. When he became ill, the temple director came to check on him and asked, “How is the master's health today?”

The master said, “Sun-faced Buddha, moon-faced Buddha.”

Yaoshan Weiyan (745-828)

Great Master Yaoshan Weiyan came from Jiangzhou (now Xinjiang City) in the northern province of Shanxi. He left home at seventeen and traveled south, eventually becoming a novice under the Zen teacher Xishan Huizhao in the southeastern province of Chaozhou. (In this community the future master Baizhang Huaihai was training as a young novice at around this time, and the two were likely students together).

After several years, Weiyan traveled to the famous Heng Mountain region in Hunan for his full ordination, and then remained there to study the scriptures and the codes of monastic discipline. Feeling the limitations of this approach, Weiyan resolved to find a true teacher, and so went to investigate Master Shitou who was living in the same region.

At their first meeting Weiyan said, “I have a general understanding of the 'Three Vehicles' and the 'Twelve Divisions of Scripture'. Now I'd like to find out about this 'southern' teaching of pointing directly at mind, seeing self-nature, and becoming awakened. I'm not clear about this approach – I ask for the master's compassionate instruction.”

Master Shitou said, “You can't attain it this way. You can't attain it some other way, either. Trying to attain it this way or that way, it can't be attained. What will you do?”

Weiyan didn't understand, and said nothing. Feeling that this young monk's affinity at this point might be elsewhere, Shitou suggested that he might go visit the famous Master Ma in Jiangxi. Weiyan took the advice and set off.

After entering Master Ma's community, Weiyan asked the master the same question he had asked Shitou: “I'm not yet clear about the teaching of pointing directly at mind, seeing self-nature, and realizing awakening. I sincerely ask for the master's instruction.”

Master Ma said, “Sometimes I teach it by raising my eyebrows and blinking my eyes. Sometimes I don't. Sometimes raising the eyebrows and blinking the eyes shows it. Sometimes it doesn't. What is there to do?”

At these words Weiyan had a deep realization. He stayed on at the monastery and soon became Master Ma's attendant. After three years the master sent him off on pilgrimage to visit other teachers, and Weiyan felt drawn to revisit Master Shitou. He traveled back to the Heng Mountains and settled into Shitou's community

One day, as Weiyan was sitting, Master Shitou asked him, “What are you doing here?”

Weiyan said, “I'm not doing anything.”

The master said, “Then you're just sitting idly.”

Weiyan said, “If I were sitting idly, I'd be doing something.”

The master said, “Okay, you're not doing anything. But what is it you're not doing?”

Weiyan said, “Even a thousand sages don't know.”

The master approved.

Once when Master Shitou was giving a teaching to the community he said, “Words and actions cannot reach the truth.”

Weiyan responded, “No words and no actions also cannot reach the truth.”

The master said, “In this place, even a needle cannot be stuck in.”

Weiyan said, “In this place, it's like trying to plant flowers on a bare rock.”

The master approved.

After studying with Master Shitou, Weiyan eventually settled on Medicine Mountain (Yaoshan) in Lizhou (more northern Hunan), and began to teach a small community there. He first started a training center by converting a small shed for housing oxen into a monk's hall. His place was known for the austere simplicity of the living conditions, and it was said that there were sometimes less than ten students living there, but that their practice was wholehearted.

One of the rarely recorded instances of a classical master commenting on sitting practice occurred when a student asked Master Yaoshan Weiyan, “What do you think about when you're engaged in steadfast, immovable sitting?”

Master Yaoshan replied, “Thinking, not thinking.”

The student asked, “How do you do this thinking, not thinking?”

Yaoshan said, “Beyond thinking.”

Dogen comments:

The present mind is already fading. No- mind has not yet appeared.

In the vitality of this lifetime, (the foundation of) purity is the ultimate.

Dogen also said:

In beyond-thinking there is someone who sustains you.

Rumi said:

Out beyond theories of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field.

I'll meet you there.

Once a monk asked Master Yaoshan, “How can I avoid being confused by all kinds of outside appearances?”

The master said, “Just leave them alone and they won't bother you.”

The monk was unsatisfied with this. The master asked, “What ‘outside appearances’ are confusing you right now?”

A monk once asked Master Yaoshan, “What is nirvana?”
The master said, “What was your name before you were born?”

Once a monk said to Master Yaoshan, “I have doubt. I ask the master to resolve it for me.”

The master said, “Wait until I go into the hall tonight to speak. Then I’ll resolve it for you.”

That evening the master entered the hall. When the community had assembled he said, “Where is the monk who asked me today to resolve his doubt?”

The monk came forward. The master got down from the teaching seat, grabbed the monk, and said, “Everyone! This monk has doubt!”

The master then released the monk and went back to his room.

The community of Yaoshan had minimal resources; often they didn’t have an excess of lamp-oil. Being frugal, the master would usually have the assembly gather in the dark. One such night the community gathered to hear the master speak.

Master Yaoshan said, “I have a single phrase (of teaching). I’ll tell it to you when the iron bull gives birth to a calf.”

A monk came forward and said, “An iron bull is giving birth to a calf right now. Why don’t you say it?”

The master exclaimed, “Light the lamps!”

The monk had already disappeared into the dark assembly.

For a long time Master Yaoshan had not entered the hall to give a talk. The monastery director appealed to him saying, “The community has been waiting eagerly to hear a teaching from you for quite a while.”

The master said, “Well, strike the bell.”

The bell was rung and the community gathered. The master ascended the teaching seat, sat there for a while, then got down and returned to his room.

The director followed after him and said, "Master you agreed to give a teaching to the community. Why didn't you offer us a single word?"

The master replied, "There are scripture teachers for scriptures, and philosophy teachers for philosophy. What do you want from this old monk?"

A monk once asked Master Yaoshan, "Did the essence of the awakened way exist here before Bodhidharma came from India?"

The master said, "Yes, it did."

The monk asked, "Then why did he come?"

The master said, "He came exactly because it was here already."

Once a novice named Gao was visiting Master Yaoshan's place. The master asked him, "Where are you coming from?"

Gao said, "From South Peak."

The master asked, "And where are you headed?"

Gao said, "To Jiangling to receive the full ordination precepts."

The master asked, "What is the point of receiving the precepts?"

Gao replied, "To become free of birth and death."

The master said, "There is someone who doesn't receive the precepts and has no birth and death to get free from. Do you know this person?"

Gao said, "Then what is the use of getting the precepts?"

The master was silent. Gao bowed and withdrew.

Then Yaoshan's senior student Yuanzhi, who had heard the conversation, came up beside the master. Master Yaoshan said, "That novice has some life in him."

Yuanzhi said, "I'm not completely convinced. Maybe you should test him again."

When evening came Yaoshan entered the hall to give a talk. He asked, "Where is the novice I spoke with earlier today?"

Gao came forth, and the master said to him, “You're a traveler - I hear that the capital Chang'an is very busy. What do you think?”

Gao said, “My province is peaceful.”

The master said, “Is your attainment from reading scriptures or from hearing lectures?”

Gao said, “I didn't attain anything from reading scriptures or hearing lectures.”

The master said, “Many people don't read scriptures or listen to lectures. How come they don't have realization?”

Gao said, “I wouldn't say they don't have it, only that they are not willing to accept it.”

One day the lay practitioner Pangyun, who had studied with both Master Shitou and Master Ma, came to visit Master Yaoshan. The master asked him, “What is your understanding of the 'one vehicle'?”

“Everyday I just feed myself,” said Pang. “How should I know about the 'one vehicle'?”

Yaoshan replied, “Then I'd say you've never really seen Master Shitou. Is that true?”

Pang said, “You just drop one thing and pick up another. What kind of skill is that?”

Yaoshan said, “As abbot, I have many affairs to attend to.”

Pang got up to leave. Then Yaoshan said, “Dropping one thing and picking up another is actually quite useful.”

Pang said, “Now I see this question about the 'one vehicle' was skillful after all. I'm afraid I've blundered and it's gotten lost.”

Yaoshan agreed.

The monk Zun, who was serving as altar attendant in Yaoshan's community, was washing buddha statues. The master came by and said, “I see you've washed this one; can you wash the other buddha, too?”

Zun said, “Please hand me the other buddha.”

The master stopped questioning.

Once a monk asked Master Yaoshan, “What is the most precious treasure of the way?”

The master said, “Not to flatter others for your own benefit.”

The monk asked, “What is it like to not flatter others?”

The master said, “”Even if an entire nation is offered, you turn it down.”

Once the local governor Li Ao paid a visit to Medicine Mountain to meet Master Yaoshan. He asked the master, “What is ethical conduct, meditative absorption, and transcendent wisdom?”

The master replied, “This impoverished monk doesn't have such useless furniture.”

Another time Governor Li asked Master Yaoshan, “What is the way?”

The master replied, “Clouds in the blue sky, water in the bucket.”

Li Ao became a student of Master Yaoshan, and once wrote a poem

describing his teacher:

Living in a quiet, secluded place

fits your untamed character.

No need to welcome anyone, or see them off.

From the top of the mountain – a sudden shout

As the moon emerges from the clouds.

Danxia Tianran (730-824)

Master Danxia Tianran was from Dengzhou in Henan province. As a youth he was an avid scholar, and, as was expected of his class, he was

headed for a career as a government official. On his way to the capital city of Chang'an to take the civil service examinations, he met a monk who greatly impressed him, and convinced him that the life of a bureaucrat was worthless compared to a life of practicing the Way. So the young man changed course and headed toward the Heng Mountains where he met Master Shitou and joined his community.

Skeptical of the need to become an official monk, he worked as a layman in the temple kitchen for the three years of his training with Master Shitou.. Finally, at the end of his time there, he agreed to receive ordination from the master, and became the monk Tianran.

Then he began a long period of traveling to visit other teachers. He visited and practiced at least briefly with many of the well-known masters of his day, including Master Ma in Jiangxi, Nanyang Huizhong in Chang'an, and the Oxhead School teacher Master Daoqin on Jing Mountain in Hangzhou. He was also close friends with the traveling lay practitioner Pangyun, who shared his disdain for monastic piousness.

Master Tianran is most famous for the following story from his travels: One cold winter day while he was staying at the Wisdom Woods Monastery in Dongjing, Tianran, finding no firewood, took a wooden statue of the Buddha and burned it in the fire to get warm. The temple director saw this, got upset, and yelled, "Why are you burning the Buddha?"

Tianran pulled some embers from the fire and said, "I'm burning this buddha to get the sacred relics."

The director said, "How can a wooden buddha have sacred relics?"

Tianran said, "Well, if it doesn't, let's burn a couple more of them!"

Tianran eventually returned to his home region of Dengzhou in Henan and settled in a hermitage on Danxia (Red Cloud) Mountain.

When he began to attract many students, a large monastery was built for him.

Once the monk Wuxue came to study with him. He asked the master, "What is the teaching of all the awakened ones?"

Master Danxia Tianran exclaimed, “Fortunately, life is fundamentally wonderful! Why do you need to take up a dust rag and broom?”

Wuxue retreated three steps.

The master said, “Wrong.”

Wuxue again came forward.

The master said, “Wrong. Wrong.”

Wuxue then lifted one foot in the air, spun around in a circle, and started to go out.

Master Tianran said, “Such an answer! It's turning your back on all the awakened ones.”

Upon hearing these words, Wuxue had a clear understanding..

Tianhuang Daowu (748-807)

Master Tianhuang Daowu left home at age fourteen after fasting to demonstrate his resolve to his resistant parents. After ordaining as a monk at Bamboo Forest Monastery in Hangzhou, he went to study with the prominent Master Daoqin of the Oxhead School on nearby Mt. Jing.

Daowu spent five years on Mt. Jing and was regarded as a devoted practitioner - he was said to sit in meditation for hours outside in a graveyard even during a fierce storm.

Eventually Daowu left Mt. Jing and went to live as a mountain hermit for a few years on Great Plum Mountain. Then, having heard about the famous Master Ma in Hongzhou, he decided to investigate. Soon after arriving at Mazu's monastery, Master Ma confirmed the young monk's understanding, and Daowu stayed on to practice there for two years.

Eventually he began to hear about the reclusive Master Shitou, and soon decided to check out this lesser-known but highly regarded master as well. And so he set off westward to the Heng Mountains in Hunan.

When he first arrived at Shitou's mountain temple, he went to see the master and asked him, “By what method do you reveal liberating wisdom to people?”

The master said, “There are no slaves here. What do you want to be liberated from?”

Daowu then asked, “How can this be confirmed?”

The master said, “So you're still trying to grasp emptiness?”

After a pause Daowu said, “From now on, I won't do so again.”

Then Master Shitou asked, “When did you come from 'that place'?”

Daowu replied, “I haven't come from 'that place'.”

The master said, “I already know where you've come from.”

Daowu said, “Master, how can you charge me without evidence?”

The master replied, “Your body is revealed, here and now.”

Then Daowu said, “Although that's so, how will your teaching be demonstrated to those who come later?”

The master said, “Please tell me, who are those who come later?”

Upon hearing this Daowu experienced a deep realization that cleared up his remaining doubts.

After his practice with Master Shitou, Daowu traveled to Xingzhou in Hubei, and began to teach on Chaizi Mountain near the city of Jiangling. When his reputation began to spread, he was asked to become abbot of the Tianhuang (Emperor of Heaven) Monastery in Jiangling city, which became his main teaching center.

Once a monk asked Master Tianhuang Daowu, “What is the matter that has been passed down through the generations?”

The master said, “Nothing else than knowing where you come from.”

The monk asked, “How many can develop this wisdom eye?”

The master said, “Short grasses naturally become tall reeds.”

One day a monk asked Master Tianhuang, “How does one speak of the great mystery?”

The master said, “Don't say that you've realized the awakened way.”

The monk then asked, “How do you deal with students who are stuck?”

The master said, "Why don't you ask me?"

The monk said, "I just did!"

The master said, "Go! You're not yet in the place where you can receive relief."

In the city of Jiangling was a family of Central-Asian style rice cake makers (perhaps of Central Asian descent) who lived in the alley outside the gates of Tianhuang Monastery. Every day they made a donation of their cakes to the monastery, brought by the son of the family.. The master befriended him, and soon recognized his spiritual potential. When the boy would make his daily offering of ten rice cakes, the master would always return one and say, "This is for your descendants." One day the boy asked the meaning of this, and the master said, "What's wrong with returning to you what's originally yours?" The boy understood and became the master's disciple.

Years later when the boy had grown, Master Tianhuang once said to him, "If you became a monk and serve as my attendant, then at some point I'll reveal the wisdom gate of the mind essence to you." So the young man decided to get ordained, became the monk Chongxin, and took on the life of the master's attendant.

After a year had passed Chongxin said, "When I first became your attendant, you said that you would teach me about mind essence. But up to now, I haven't received any instruction."

The master said, "Since you've started this life, I've never stopped giving you instruction."

Chongxin asked, "When has the master been teaching me?"

The master said, "When you greet me I join my palms; when I sit you stand by to wait on me; when you bring tea I receive it from you. When have I not given instruction about mind essence?"

Chongxin was silent for a while. Then the master said, "When seeing, just see! If you try to think about it you'll miss it."

Upon hearing these words, Chongxin had a deep realization.

Layman Pangyun (d. 808)

Master Pangyun was born and grew up in Xiangyang city, Hubei, the son of a government official. When his father was transferred to Hengyang in Hunan, the young man joined him, and in this new city he married and had a daughter. Disillusioned with conventional life early on, Pang resisted the bureaucratic life expected of him, and managed to avoid a government post. Instead he devoted himself to spiritual practice, building a hermitage beside his house where he could focus on meditation. As he became more committed to simplicity, and had been joined by his wife in this pursuit, they donated their house to be made into a temple, and moved into the hermitage. Then they loaded all their valuable possessions onto a raft and sank it in a nearby lake.

When asked why he didn't just give them away, Pang said that they had been a source of anxiety for him, and an impediment to the way. How could he wish that on someone else?

After this the Pang family began living off a meager income from crafting and selling bamboo utensils in the street. Soon the layman, already in his forties, decided to travel to meet teachers, and he first set off for the Heng Mountains to the north. There he found his way to the practice place of Master Shitou.

Layman Pangyun once asked Master Shitou, “Who is the one who is not attached to the ten thousand things?”

Shitou immediately covered Pang's mouth with his hand. Pang had a deep realization.

The layman stayed on to practice with Master Shitou. One day the master asked him, “Since seeing me what have your daily activities been?”

Pang said, “When you ask about my daily activities I can't open my mouth.”

Shitou said, “Because I know you're like that, I'm asking you.”

Pang said, “How wondrous, how miraculous – chopping wood and carrying water.”

Later Shitou asked whether the layman would like to shave his head, dye his clothes and become a monk, but Pang said, “I want to do what I like,” and he remained a layman.

Eventually Pangyun travelled to Jiangxi to meet Master Ma. He asked his old question, “Who is the one who isn't attached to the ten thousand things?”

Master Ma said, “When you swallow all the water in the West River in one gulp, then I'll tell you.”

Hearing these words, Pang had another liberating awakening, and all his doubts were resolved. He practiced with Mazu for two years, and then continued his travels and encounters with other monks and teachers.

He stayed for awhile on Medicine Mountain with Master Shitou's disciple Master Yaoshan, and also became close friends with another of Shitou's disciples, the irreverent and free-spirited adept Danxia Tianran.

Between excursions he would return to his wife and daughter in Hengyang.

Both his wife and daughter had also become deeply devoted to the spiritual path, and all three were eventually recognized for their clear wisdom. The layman was particularly close to his precocious daughter Lingzhao whose sharp wit could often outdo her father.

One day in his hermitage, Layman Pang asked Lingzhao, “An ancient said, 'the bright clarity of the ancestral teacher's mind is the bright clarity of the hundred grass tips.' How do you understand this?”

“Such a venerable elder and yet you talk like this!” admonished Lingzhao.

“Well, what would you say?” asked the layman.

“The bright clarity of the ancestral teacher's mind is the bright clarity of the hundred grass tips,” replied Lingzhao. The layman laughed.

Another time at the hermitage someone asked the layman if the practice of the Way was difficult or easy.

“Difficult, difficult,” said the layman, “like trying to cover a tree in sesame seeds.”

“Easy, easy,” said Pang's wife, “just like touching your feet to the ground when you get out of bed.”

“Not difficult, not easy,” said Lingzhao, “On the hundred grass tips, the ancestor's meaning.”

Toward the end of his life Pangyun traveled north toward his birthplace of Xiangyang with his beloved daughter Lingzhao, herself now an adept. The two found a cave south of Deer Gate Mountain in Xiang province, and there settled into retreat for the last years of Pangyun's life.

Baizhang Huaihai (749-814)

Master Baizhang Huaihai was born to a powerful aristocratic family on the eastern seaboard province of Fuzhou (modern Fujian). Well-educated as a child, he entered monastic life as a teen under the teacher Huizhao, where the older novice who would become Master Yaoshan was also studying. After his full ordination at Mt. Heng, Huaihai moved to Lujian (in modern Anhui province) where he studied Buddhist scriptures. Then, while still in his twenties, he sought out Master Ma at Gonggong Mountain in southern Jiangxi and became his disciple.

One day Huaihai accompanied Mazu on a walk. A flock of wild geese flew past them. Master Ma said, "What's that?"

Huaihai said, "Wild geese."

The master said, "Where'd they go?"

Huaihai said, "They flew away."

The master then grabbed Huaihui's nose and twisted."

Huaihai cried out, "Ouch!"

The master said, "Do you still say they flew away?"

Huaihai had a deep realization.

The next day Master Ma entered the hall to address the community.

When the monks had all assembled, Huaihai went forward and rolled up the bowing mat in front of the teacher's seat. The master then got down from the seat and returned to his room. Huaihai followed after him. The master turned to him and asked, "Why did you roll up the mat before I'd said a word?"

Huaihai said, "Yesterday you hurt my nose."

The master said, "Where in your mind are you keeping yesterday's matter?"

Huaihai said, "Today my nose doesn't hurt anymore."

The master said, "You understand today's matter very well."

When Master Ma moved north to Hongzhou, Huaihai accompanied him and continued his training at Open Source Monastery. After the master's passing on nearby Stone Gate Mountain, Huaihai took up residence on the mountain and began to teach. Eventually he was invited to become the abbot of a monastery on Great Hero Mountain in a remote region southwest of Stone Gate. Because of the high and steep peaks on this mountain, it was also known as "Baizhang" (Hundred Fathoms) Mountain, and this name became Huaihai's teaching name.

Once a monk asked Master Baizhang Huaihai, "What is the most rare and wonderful affair?"

The master said, "Sitting alone on Great Hero Peak."

During his teaching career, Master Baizhang is said to have created a new code of monastic regulations for his students that was tailored to the needs of a Zen community, and differed substantially from the more general rules for Buddhist monks. The written text for this new code has never been found, and most scholars today doubt that it was ever written. However many teachers of Baizhang's time wrote commentaries to the monastic codes which expressed their particular emphases and concerns. Although it is unlikely that Master Baizhang intended to replace the old code, it is probable that he encouraged, through writing or just orally, a characteristic lifestyle that had been developing in the communities of the Zen movement. This lifestyle, although perhaps not radically innovative within the world of Chinese Buddhism, did feature some broad shifts in priority. These included less emphasis on strict adherence to the rules of classical Indian vinaya, and a strong encouragement of farming for self-sufficiency and sustainability. Farm work also fostered humility, provided exercise, and helped keep the mind focused on the present. An awareness of the need to develop a meditative mind in all activities of life soon became a hallmark of the Zen tradition.

One day Master Baizhang was out working in the fields with his community. When the drum sounded ending the work period and announcing the noon meal, a monk held up his hoe and began to laugh. Then he went back to the monastery. The master said, “Wonderful. This is the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion entering the gate of essential wisdom.”

Later that day the master summoned the monk and asked him why he had laughed out in the field. The monk said, “I was hungry. As soon as I heard the drum, I knew it was time for the noon meal.”

The master laughed.

Whenever Master Baizhang would address the community in the Dharma Hall, there was an old man who would always come to hear the

talk. When the community dispersed, he left as well. One day he didn't leave. The master asked, "Who are you?"

The old man said, "A long time ago I resided on this mountain as abbot. Once a student asked me whether a great adept still falls into cause and effect. I answered that no, a great adept does not fall into cause and effect. As a result, I've been living as a wild fox for countless ages. Now I ask the master to please say a turning phrase for me so that I may be free of this fox body." Then he asked, "Does a great adept fall into cause and effect or not?"

The master said, "A great adept does not ignore cause and effect."

With these words the old man had a great awakening. He bowed and said, "I've been released from the wild fox body."

Dogen said:

Whether (our view is) "not falling" or "not ignoring," cause and effect simply brings more cause and effect. Do you want to know causes and understand effects?

(Dogen raised his whisk and said) Look, look. Cause and effect are clear. (He then put down his whisk and got down from his seat).

Once the monk Da'an asked Master Baizhang, "This student yearns to understand awakening. What is it?"

The Master said, "You are like someone searching for the ox while riding the ox."

Da'an asked, "How is it after understanding?"

The master said, "It's like a person returning home riding the ox."

Da'an said, "I'm still not clear. How can I protect and care for it from beginning to end?"

The master said, "It's like an ox herder holding up a staff to watch that the ox does not disturb people's seedlings."

From then on Da'an understood the meaning.

The monk Xiyun once asked Master Baizhang, “What method did the ancient sages use to teach people?”

The master sat still and remained silent.

Xiyun then asked, “If so, what will our descendants in later generations receive?”

The master said, “I had thought you were such a person.” Then he returned to the abbot's room.

Many of the talks that Master Baizhang gave during his teaching career were written down by his disciples, and after his passing they were collected and published. This collection, called Baizhang's Extensive Record, remains today as the earliest existing full collection of the teachings of a Tang Dynasty Zen master. (For excerpts, see Part Two: Discourses).

Nanquan Puyuan (748-835)

Master Nanquan Puyuan was from the city of Xinzheng in southern Henan. His family name was Wang, and later, as a master, he sometimes called himself, “Old Teacher Wang.” He was already a seasoned monk, well-versed in the various philosophies and scriptures of Buddhism, when he traveled to Hongzhou to study with Master Ma. Puyuan's insight and confidence was already apparent during his training at Mazu's monastery:

One day while Puyuan was serving rice gruel to the community, Master Ma asked, “What's in the wooden bucket?”

“The old man should keep his mouth shut and not say such words,” replied Puyuan.

While practicing with Master Ma, Puyuan took some time to visit other teachers as well. Once he started out on a journey to visit the

aging master Nanyang Huizhong in the capital of Chang'an, together with his fellow monks Zhichang and Baoche. Just after leaving the monastery, Puyuan stopped and drew a circle on the road. He then said to his companions, "What can you say? If you give a good response, we'll be on our way. Otherwise, maybe we shouldn't go."

Zhichang sat down inside the circle. Baoche made a curtsy. Puyuan said, "Let's not go."

Eventually the group did make the trip to see Master Nanyang. When Puyuan entered the master's room for an audience, the master asked him, "Where are you from?"

Puyuan said, "From Hongzhou."

The master asked, "Do you come with the truth of Master Ma, or not?"

Puyuan said, "Just this is it."

The master said, "But is there something behind your back?"

Puyuan immediately turned around and walked out.

Once Puyuan visited a master called "Priest Nirvana" (Niepan Heshang, probably Master Baizhang Weizheng, an older disciple of Master Ma*). Priest Nirvana asked Puyuan, "Is there any teaching that hasn't already been spoken by the ancient sages?"

Puyuan said, "It's not mind, it's not Buddha, it's not a thing."

Nirvana said, "Is that all?"

Puyuan said, "I'm like this. What about you?"

Nirvana said, "'I'm not a teacher. How should I know if there's a teaching that has or hasn't been spoken?"

Puyuan said, "I don't understand."

Nirvana said, "I've said enough for you."

*see the glossary for more about the mysterious identity of this character.

After the passing of Master Ma and a subsequent period of traveling, Puyuan entered the mountains for solitary retreat. He settled on a mountain called South Spring (Nanquan) in the area of Chizou (in modern Anhui Province). Here he built a thatched hut and remained alone for many years focusing on meditation. Eventually some monks began to visit seeking his guidance, including the monk Congshen, who would become his senior student. Finally, a prominent government official named Lu Gong came to study with Puyuan, and he invited the master to move to a local monastery and become the abbot, in order to teach more extensively. Puyuan accepted the offer.

Official Lu once requested of Master Nanquan Puyuan “I ask the master to expound the teaching for the sake of the community.”

Master Nanquan said, “What do you want this old man to talk about?”

Lu said, “Master, don't you have some expedient method for entering the Way?”

Nanquan said, “What are those in the community lacking?”

Lu said, “What will you do about those in the four modes of birth and the six realms?”

Nanquan said, “This old monk doesn't teach them.”

Once Master Nanquan addressed the community, “Master Ma was known to say, 'This very mind itself is Buddha.' Old teacher Wang doesn't talk like this. I say - it's not mind, it's not Buddha, it's not a thing. Is saying it like this a mistake or not?”

Nanquan's senior disciple Congshen made prostrations and left.

Another time Nanquan said, “Mind is not Buddha. Wisdom is not the Way.”

A monk asked, “All past ancestors, including the great teacher from Jiangxi (Mazu), have taught that 'mind is Buddha' and 'ordinary mind is the Way.' Now you, master, say that mind is not Buddha, and wisdom

is not the Way. I am uncertain about this – I ask the master to compassionately offer an explanation.”

Nanquan replied in a loud voice, “If you're a buddha, how could you still have doubts and have to ask this old monk for explanations? What kind of buddha stumbles along the way, holding doubts like that? I am not a buddha, and I haven't seen the ancestors. Since it is you talking about ancestors, you can go seek them by yourself.”

The monk then asked, “Since your reverence explains it like that, what kind of practical advice can you offer a student like me?”

Nanquan said, “Just now lift empty space with your palm.”

The monk said, “Empty space has no movable form. How can I lift it?”

Nanquan said, “When you say it has no movable form, that is already movement. Does empty space say, 'I have no movable form'? This is all just your particular conception.”

The monk asked, “Since mind is Buddha is not correct, is it that mind becomes Buddha?”

Nanquan said, “'Mind is Buddha' and 'mind becomes Buddha' are just ideas created by your thinking...Do not conceive of mind and do not conceive of Buddha. Whatever you conceive of, it becomes an object of attachment...Because of that the great teacher from Jiangxi said, 'It is not mind, it is not Buddha, it is not a thing.' He wanted to teach you of later generations how to act. Nowadays, students put on religious robes and walk around contemplating things that are of no concern to them.

Have you attained anything that way?”

The monk asked, “What does the master mean by 'Mind is not Buddha, wisdom is not the Way?’”

Nanquan said, “Don't conceptualize 'mind is not Buddha, wisdom is not the Way.' I have no mind to bring up – What are you going to attach to?”

The monk said, “If there is nothing at all, then how is it different than empty space?”

Nanquan said, “Since it is not a thing, how can you compare it to empty space? And why bring up sameness and difference?”

Concerning “Mind is not Buddha, wisdom is not the Way”

Dogen said:

Great assembly, do you want to clearly understand this point?

The way for students is not to go to bed before your teacher. (EK5-

381)

One day at Nanquan's monastery the monks of the eastern and western halls were arguing over a cat. The master saw this and immediately grabbed a knife, picked up the cat, and said, “Someone say a true word and you'll save the cat. Otherwise I'll cut it in two!”

The monks were silent. The master then made the gesture of cutting the cat, and walked away.

Later the senior monk Congshen returned from errands outside the monastery and went to see the master. The master told him the story of the cat. Congshen responded by taking off his straw sandals and placing them on his head (as a gesture of mourning). Then he walked out of the room. As he left, the master said, “If you had been there you would have saved the cat.”

Dogen said:

Nanquan knew how to cut into two, but he didn't know how to cut into one...

If I had been Nanquan, when the students couldn't answer, I would have released the cat saying that the students had already spoken. (zuimonki 2 – 4)

Dogen also said:

His monks were refined, with voices like thunder. (EK9 – 76)

Once Master Nanquan said to the community, “All the awakened ones of past, present, and future don't know what it is. Cats and cows know what it is.”

Once the monk Xiyun came to stay at Nanquan's monastery. He had already studied with Master Baizhang Huaihai, and was given the respect of an elder monk. One day at the noon meal as Master Nanquan entered the hall with his bowls, Xiyun, sitting in the head monk's seat,

didn't stand up to receive him. Nanquan said, "Your reverence, how long have you been teaching the way?"

Xiyun replied, "Since before the era of Bhismaraja Buddha."

Nanquan said, "Then you're still the grandson of Old Teacher Wang! Get out of here!"

Another time Master Nanquan said to Xiyun, "There is a kingdom of gold and silver houses. Who do you suppose lives there?"

Xiyun said, "Sounds like the dwelling place of the sages."

The master then said, "There is another person. Do you know in what country he lives?"

Xiyun folded his hands and stood still.

The master said, "You can't answer. Why don't you ask me?"

Xiyun said, "There is another person. Where does he live?"

The master said, "Oh, what a pity this is."

Once at the start of a work period Master Nanquan asked Xiyun, "Where are you going?"

Xiyun said, "I'm going to gather some greens."

The master asked, "What will you cut them with?"

Xiyun held up a knife.

The master said, "You understand how to be the guest, but you still don't understand how to be the host."

When Master Nanquan was finally slowing down with age, his senior disciple Congshen once asked him, "Where will the one who knows eventually go?"

The master said, "This person will go down the mountain to a donor's house and become a water buffalo."

Congshen said, "I'm grateful for that."

The master said, "Last night at midnight the moon came in through the window."

Yanguan Qi'an (750-843)

Master Yanguan Qi'an was from Haiting county in the modern province of Zhejiang. He grew up in a prominent wealthy family that had relations to the Tang royalty. Entering the monastic life in his youth at a local temple, he later received full ordination at Hengshan in Hunan. Soon after he traveled to Jiangxi where he first encountered Master Ma at Gonggong Mountain. He became a student of the master just before the master's move north, and then followed him to the new monastery in Hongzhou. Studying with the master for many years, he became one of Mazu's most senior disciples.

After the passing of Master Ma, Qi'an was invited to teach in several places, and he eventually settled in a monastery built for him in Yanguan (near Hangzhou in his native province). Helped, no doubt, by his family connections, he soon became a famous teacher and was visited by numerous scholars and dignitaries as well as training monks.

Once a scholar-priest came to visit Master Yanguan Qi'an. The master asked him, "What scriptures are your specialty?"

The scholar said, "I teach the 'Flower Garland Sutra'."

The master asked, "According to this sutra, how many kinds of 'dharma realms' are there?"

The scholar said, "Broadly speaking, there are limitless dharma realms. But they can be reduced to four types."

Then the master held up his whisk and said, "What dharma realm is this?"

The scholar was at a loss, and sat there silently figuring how to answer.

The master said, "Knowing through thinking, understanding through contemplating – it's all just making a living in a ghost cave. A single lamp, when put in the sunlight, loses all its brightness."

Master Yanguan had a younger dharma brother named Fachang who had gone to live deep in the forest on Great Plum Mountain. Once a monk told Master Yanguan the story of someone asking Fachang about the essential principle of the awakened way. Fachang had said, “There is no essential principle.”

Master Yanguan responded, “One coffin with two corpses.”

Yanguan had a rhinoceros-horn folding fan amongst the treasures at his temple. One day he said to his attendant, “Bring me the rhinoceros fan.”

The attendant said, “It's broken.”

The master responded, “If the fan is broken, then bring me the rhinoceros!”

Master Yanguan was once visited by a Japanese monk on a mission from the Empress Tachibana Kachiko of Japan. The monk asked Master Yanguan if he had a disciple he could send to Japan to instruct the Empress, who had become interested in Zen teaching after hearing about it from the monk Kukai, the founder of Japanese esoteric Buddhism (who had traveled in China). Master Yanguan sent his disciple Yikung, who thus became the first Zen teacher in Japan, and the Empress, who later became a nun, became the first Zen student. Yikung, however, eventually returned to China without establishing an enduring following in Japan.

Toward the end of Master Yanguan's long life, the Emperor Wuzong came to power and began to implement a persecution of Buddhist institutions and clergy. Probably because of Yanguan's high-placed connections, his monastery was relatively protected from destruction, and from the defrocking of monks that went on elsewhere. Li Chen, the expected future emperor, came to the safe haven of Yanguan's monastery to keep a low profile for a while during the politically turbulent times. Greatly impressed by the master, when he eventually ascended to the throne and became Emperor Xuanzong, he ended the persecutions and became a generous supporter of the monastic order.

Damei Fachang (752-839)

Master Damei Fachang was from Huaiyang in Hubei Province. He left home at a young age to become a novice at Jade Spring Monastery in nearby Jingzhou. An avid scholar, he was known for his ability to memorize many scripture passages while still a novice, but later he became interested in Zen. After his full ordination, he soon sought out Master Ma in Hongzhou and became his student

One day Fachang asked Master Ma, “What is Buddha?”

The master said, “This mind itself is Buddha.”

Fachang had a deep realization. He immediately made prostrations and departed for the mountains to engage in solitary practice. First investigating the famous Buddhist center at Mt. Tiantai, Fachang then entered the more remote peaks of Great Plum (Damei) Mountain and built a hut deep in the wilderness. He was said to survive off wild food such as pine and cedar nuts, and to make clothes out of lotus leaves from the forest ponds, while leading a life devoted to meditation.

Unlike masters like Yanguan, Fachang remained in seclusion for many years, unknown by rulers or officials, and not receiving the support of any patrons.

One day a monk was searching the woods for a staff when he accidentally came upon Fachang's hermitage. After making acquaintances, he asked the hermit, “Master, how long have you been living here?”

Fachang replied, “I see the trees turn green in spring, and yellow in autumn, but don't count the months and years.”

Later the monk asked, “Where's the path down off the mountain?”

Fachang said, “Go following the stream.”

When the monk returned to his monastery, the news of the hermit began to circulate. When Master Ma heard about him, he sent a monk to find him, and to bring him a question. When the monk found him, he

asked, “When you were with Master Ma, what did you come to understand that led you to dwell on this mountain?”

Fachang replied, “The master simply said to me that this mind itself is Buddha. Then I came to live here.”

The monk said, “These days the master's teaching is different. Now he says, 'No mind, no Buddha'.”

Fachang said, “That old man endlessly confuses people. He can keep 'no mind, no Buddha'; as for me, it's still just 'This mind itself is Buddha'.”

The monk went back and reported this to Master Ma. The master said, “The plum has ripened.”

Eventually Fachang's reputation began to spread, and students would travel into the mountain forests to receive his teaching, as he remained in his beloved wilderness home. Not until he was in his eighties did he allow his supporters to build him a larger, more accessible temple to accommodate his increasing number of students. Among his disciples was the master Hangzhou Tianlong, as well as a number of Korean monks who went on to become prominent teachers in their own country.

One day Master Damei Fachang said to his disciples, “When it comes it can't be held back. When it goes it can't be pursued.”

As the master paused, they all heard the sound of a squirrel. Then the master said, “It's just this! Not something else! Each of you, uphold and sustain it well.”

After saying these words the master passed away.

Guizong Zhichang (dates unknown)

Master Guizong Zhichang came from Jiangling City in Hubei. Little detail is recorded about his life, but he became known as a prominent

disciple of Master Ma, and a teacher with a severe style that influenced later masters, particularly Huangpo Xiyun. After his training with Mazu he lived and taught at Returning to the Ancestral Source (Guizong) Monastery at Hermitage Mountain (Lushan), a famous Buddhist center and scenic attraction in northern Jiangxi.

A monk once asked Master Guizong, “What is the essential mystery?”

Guizong said, “No one can understand it.”

The monk said, “How about those who earnestly seek it?”

Guizong said, “Those who seek it miss it completely.”

The monk asked, “How about those who don't seek it?”

Guizong said, “Go! This is no place for you to use your mind.”

The monk persevered and said, “Then there's no expedient gate through which you can help me enter?”

Guizong said, “The compassionate bodhisattva 'Observer of the World's Sounds' has a sublime wisdom that can save the world from suffering.”

The monk asked, “What is this bodhisattva's sublime wisdom?”

The master tapped the top of his incense urn three times with his staff and said, “Did you hear that or not?”

The monk said, “I heard it.”

Guizong said, “Why didn't I hear it?”

The monk was silent.

The master took his staff and got down from the seat.

A monk was leaving the monastery and came to say goodbye to Master Guizong.

Guizong asked, “Where are you going?”

The monk said, “I'm going traveling to study the five flavors of Zen.”

Guizong said, “Here I have one-flavored Zen.”

The monk asked, “What is one-flavored Zen?”

Guizong hit him.

The monk said, "I understand! I understand!"
Guizong said, "Speak!"
The monk hesitated.
Guizong hit him again.

Governor Li Bo of Jiangzhou once came to study with Master Guizong. He asked, "In the scriptures it says that a mustard seed fits inside Mt. Sumeru. This nobody would doubt. But it also says that Mt. Sumeru fits inside a mustard seed. Isn't this simply untrue?"

Guizong said, "I've heard that Your Excellency has read hundreds of scriptures. Is this so?"

The governor said, "Yes, that's true."

Guizong said, "Your head is about the size of a coconut. Where did all those scriptures go?"

The governor couldn't respond. He thanked the master, and from then on showed him great respect and served him as a disciple.

Another time the governor said, "I'm not asking about the three vehicles and the twelve divisions of scriptures. But what is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from India?"

Guizong held up his fist and said, "Do you understand?"

Li said, "I don't understand."

Guizong said, "All your studying and you still don't even understand a fist!"

Li said, "Please master, explain it to me."

Guizong said, "If you truly meet a person of the Way; then you will receive everything. If you don't meet anyone, then you just spread worldly truth."

A monk asked Master Guizong, "What is the way?"

Guizong said, "You are it."

Other Students Of Master Ma

Master Shigong Huizang had been a hunter when he first met Master Ma in Linchuan, early in the master's career. As a hunter, he is one of the few examples of students not from the upper classes who are remembered in the annals of Zen history. After giving up hunting and becoming a monk, Huizang worked in the kitchen at Master Ma's monastery in Linchuan, and then likely followed the master to his next teaching center on Gonggong Mountain. Eventually Huizang taught on Shigong Mountain in his native region south of Linchuan.

Once Huizang asked his younger fellow student Zhizang, “Do you know how to grasp space?”

Zhizang said, “Yes, I know.”

‘ Huizang asked, “How do you grasp it?”

Zhizang grabbed at the air with his hand.

Huizang said, “You don't know how to grasp space.”

Zhizang asked, “How do you grasp it, elder brother?”

Huizang grabbed Zhizang's nose and pulled. Zhizang yelled, “Ow! You're pulling my nose off!”

Huizang said, “That's how to grasp it.”

Master Panshan Baoji came from Youzhou in the northern province of Hebei, near modern Beijing. He traveled south to study with Master Ma in Hongzhou, after which he returned north to teach on Pan Mountain in his home region.

Once Baoji was walking through a market when he overheard a customer speaking to a butcher. The customer said, “Cut me a good piece.”

The butcher put down his knife, folded his hands, and said, “Which piece is not good?”

Upon hearing these words, Baoji had a deep realization.

After becoming a teacher on Pan Mountain, Master Panshan Baoji once said to his community, “As to the moon of mind – it is lone and perfect; its light illumines the myriad phenomena. If the light does not shine on objects, the objects have no existence. But when both light and objects are forgotten – what is that?”

Among Master Panshan Baoji's disciples was the eccentric, homeless monk Puhua, who later became a friend and mentor to the influential master Linji Yixuan, as well as the inspiration for a sect of wandering, flute playing religious mendicants.

Master Mayu Baoche was a prominent student of Master Ma who practiced with the community in Hongzhou. He also visited Master Nanyang Huizhong in Chang'an (probably traveling with his fellow student Puyuan, later of Nanquan) and was a good friend of Master Danxia Tianran. After his training Baoche became a teacher on Mayu Mountain in the northern province of Shanxi.

One day Master Mayu Baoche was fanning himself. A monk approached and asked, “Master, the nature of wind is eternal and there is no place it doesn't reach. Why, then, do you fan yourself?”

“Although you understand that the nature of wind is eternal,” the master replied, “you don't understand the meaning of it's reaching everywhere.”

“What is the meaning of it's reaching everywhere?” asked the monk. The master just kept fanning himself.

Daowu Yuanzhi (769-835) & Yunyan Tansheng (781-841)

Master Daowu Yuanzhi and Master Yunyan Tansheng both grew up in the area of Hongzhou, the capital of Jiangxi. They became close

companions during their years of training together as monks under several teachers.(The Ancestor's Hall Anthology claims that they were actually brothers).

Yuanzhi, the elder by twelve years, first studied under Master Weizhong of Baizhang Mountain, an elder disciple of Master Ma.

Soon after (probably on Weizhong's passing) Yuanzhi began to study with the influential master Huaihai, also on Baizhang Mountain. While there he was joined by the teen-age novice Tansheng.

It is not clear how long Yuanzhi remained with Master Baizhang Huaihai, but the Ancestor's Hall Anthology relates that he left after only a year and traveled to Hunan, where he began to study with the austere Master Yaoshan Weiyan.

One day Master Yaoshan asked Yuanzhi, "Where have you been?"

Yuanzhi said, "Walking in the mountains."

Yaoshan said, "Without leaving this room, say something immediately!"

Yuanzhi said, "On the mountain the birds are white as snow. At the bottom of the brook, the fish never stop swimming."

Once when Yaoshan was brushing calligraphy with Yuanzhi, the master drew the character for "Buddha." Then he asked Yuanzhi, "What is it?"

Yuanzhi said, "Buddha."

Yaoshan said, "You talk too much."

Once master Yaoshan entered the hall to address the assembled monks, and said, "I have a single phrase that I have never said to anyone."

A monk asked, "How is the master's one phrase spoken?"

The master said, "Without words."

Yuanzhi said, "It's already spoken."

Yuanzhi served as a close disciple of Master Yaoshan for many years. Meanwhile, his younger brother Tansheng remained studying with Master Baizhang until the master's passing. Then he joined his brother on Medicine Mountain to receive further training from Master Yaoshan. At some point during this period, Yuanzhi and Tansheng decided to travel and visit Master Nanquan Puyuan.

Soon after their arrival on South Spring Mountain, Master Nanquan asked Yuanzhi, "Venerable, what's your name?"

"Yuanzhi," he replied. (meaning "Complete Wisdom").

Nanquan asked, "Where wisdom doesn't reach, how do you find completion?"

Yuanzhi said, "I'd rather not say."

Nanquan said, "Bright and clear; if you speak of it, horns grow on your head."

A few days later Yuanzhi and Tansheng were in the washroom mending their robes. Master Nanquan was passing by and, seeing Yuanzhi, stopped and said, "The other day you said that you'd rather not speak, and I said that if you spoke horns would grow. But how, then, do you practice?"

Yuanzhi immediately left the room and headed toward the monks' hall. The master walked off. Then Yuanzhi returned to the washroom.

Tansheng said, "Why didn't you answer the master?"

Yuanzhi said, "Are you being clever?"

Tansheng said nothing more. Later he went to see Master Nanquan and asked, "Why did Elder Zhi not answer your question earlier?"

Nanquan said, "He practices among myriad beings."

Tansheng asked, "What is practicing among myriad beings?"

The master said, "Don't you see what was said? Never speak of where wisdom doesn't reach. If you do, horns will grow on your head. Therefore, you just go practice among myriad beings."

Tansheng was not yet satisfied.

Later Yuanzhi and Tansheng returned to Medicine Mountain. Tansheng went to see Master Yaoshan and told him the story. The

master asked, "How do you understand this teaching?" Tansheng said nothing. The master laughed.

Then Tansheng asked, "What is practicing among myriad beings?"

The master said, "I'm tired today. Go away and come back another time."

Tansheng pressed, "I came to see you specifically about this matter!"

The master said, "Go away!" So Tansheng left.

Yuanzhi, waiting outside, asked Tansheng how it went. Tansheng said, "The master wouldn't answer me." Yuanzhi bowed toward the master's room.

Later, when the two monks were with the master, Yaoshan said, "Never speak of where wisdom doesn't reach. If you do, horns will grow. Practitioner Zhi, what about this?"

Yuanzhi immediately left.

Tansheng then asked the master, "Why did elder brother Zhi not answer you?"

The master said, "My back hurts today. Zhi understands; go ask him."

So Tansheng caught up with Yuanzhi and asked, "Elder brother, why didn't you answer the master?"

Yuanzhi said, "You should really go ask the master."

Tansheng couldn't get them to speak of it.

A monk once asked the later master Yunju Daoying, "What is this 'where wisdom doesn't reach'?"

Yunju said, "A poisonous phrase."

The monk asked, "What is a poisonous phrase?"

Yunju said, "With one stroke it slays dragons and snakes."

Master Yaoshan often asked Tansheng to recount the experiences he had had in his many years of training with his former teacher Baizhang. (As Yaoshan and Baizhang had practiced together in their youths, Yaoshan was probably curious about Baizhang's teaching methods, as well as hoping that Tansheng might have a fresh insight). One day when the master had asked about this, Tansheng said,

“Once Master Baizhang entered the hall to give a talk. When everyone had assembled, he suddenly used his staff to drive everyone out. Then he shouted at us, and when we looked back at him, he said, 'What is it?'”

Yaoshan said, “Why didn't you tell me this before? Thanks to you, today I've finally re-met brother Hai.”

Upon hearing this, Tansheng had a deep realization, and was finally relieved of his remaining doubts.

One day on Medicine Mountain, Tansheng asked Yuanzhi, “How does the bodhisattva of compassion use her thousand hands and eyes to free all beings?”

Yuanzhi said, “It's like reaching back for your pillow in the middle of the night.”

Tansheng nodded in understanding.

Yuanzhi asked, “How do you understand it?”

Tansheng said, “All over the body are hands and eyes.”

Yuanzhi said, “That's pretty good, but not totally complete.”

Tansheng said, “What would you say, elder brother?”

Yuanzhi said, “Throughout the body are hands and eyes.”

Another time, when Tansheng was sweeping, Yuanzhi came up to him and said, “Too busy!”

Tansheng replied, “You should know, there is one who is not busy.”

Yuanzhi said, “Then is there a second moon?”

Tansheng held out the broom and said, “Which moon is this?”

Yuanzhi walked away.

Later the master Xuansha said, “Exactly the second moon.”

After finally leaving Medicine Mountain, Yuanzhi and Tansheng visited the monk Lingyu, who had been a fellow student with them

under Baizhang Huaihai. Lingyu had since become the teacher at Harmonious Celebration (Tongqing) Monastery on Gui (or Dagui) Mountain in Hunan.

While visiting the monastery on Gui Mountain, Yuanzhi went to see a doctor in the infirmary. When he returned to the main temple, his friend Lingyu, now Master Guishan, asked him, “How many people are sick?”

Yuanzhi said, “Some are sick, some are not.”

Guishan asked, “Is monk Zhi one who is not sick?”

Yuanzhi said, “Being sick or not has nothing to do with it. Speak! Speak!”

Guishan said, “Being able to speak has nothing to do with it.”

Master Guishan had a talk with Tansheng. He said to the younger monk, “I've heard that when you were at Yaoshan, you were able to tame lions.* Is that so?”

Tansheng said, “Yes.”

Guishan asked, “Were they always under control?”

Tansheng said, “Sometimes they were under control, sometimes they ran loose.”

Guishan asked, “When they were loose, where did they go?”

Tansheng said, “Watch out! They're loose!”

*the Chinese word for “lion” (shi) sounds, and looks, like the word for “teacher.”

When Yuanzhi and Tansheng finally settled down as teachers, they remained in close proximity in the region of Tanzhou, Hunan.

Master Daowu

Yuanzhi became the abbot of a prominent monastery on Awakening Way (Daowu) Mountain. He soon attracted many students, including the monks Qingzhu and Zhongxin, who later became well-known teachers.

Master Daowu Yuanzhi once made a personal visit to a patron's house for a funeral. He brought along his student Zhongxin as an attendant. When the two of them were alone, Zhongxin tapped on the coffin and asked, "Alive or dead?"

Master Daowu replied, "I won't say alive; I won't say dead."

Zhongxin said, "Why won't you say?"

Daowu said, "I won't say! I won't say!"

On their way back to the monastery, Zhongxin was burning with his question. He said to Daowu, "Master, tell me right now – if you don't, I feel like I want to hit you!"

Daowu replied, "Hit me if you want, but I still won't say."

Back at the monastery Zhongxin sought out Master Daowu's senior student Qingzhu, told him the story, and asked for guidance.

Qingzhu said, "I won't say alive; I won't say dead."

Zhongxin said, "Why won't you say?"

Qingzhu said, "I won't say! I won't say!"

Zhongxin finally had an insight.

Dogen said:

Alive or dead? All awakened ones of the past, present, and future don't know.

Dead or alive? Cats and cows know.

Once a monk asked Master Daowu, "What is the most profound understanding?"

The master came down from his seat, bowed, and said, "You have come from afar, and yet I have no answer for you."

Master Yunyan

The monk Tansheng became the teacher of an unusual community of cave-dwelling yogins at a place called Cloud Cliff (Yunyan) in the region of Youxian in Hunan.

One day Master Yunyan Tansheng addressed his community saying, "There is a child in this dwelling who can answer any question."

The young monk Liangjie came forward and asked, "How large is his library?"

Master Yunyan said, "There's not a single word."

Liangjie asked, "Then how can he be so knowledgeable?"

Yunyan said, "Day or night, he doesn't sleep."

Liangjie asked, "If we ask about the single matter, how will he respond?"

Yunyan said, "Although he can answer, he won't."

Once the monk Qingzhu visited Master Yunyan. The master asked, "Where are you from?"

Qingzhu said, "From Guishan."

Yunyan asked, "How long were you there?"

Qingzhu said, "One year."

Yunyan said, "If you stayed, you could have become head of the monastery."

Qingzhu said, "Although I was there, I didn't learn anything."

Yunyan said, "Guishan didn't learn anything either."

Once Master Yunyan asked a nun who was studying with him, "Is your father still alive?"

The nun said, "Yes."

Yunyan asked, "How old is he?"

The nun said, “He's eighty.”

Yunyan said, “You have a father who's not eighty; do you know this person?”

The nun replied, “Isn't this the one who 'thus comes'?”

Yunyan said, “That is just a descendant.”

One day a monk asked Master Yunyan, “What can we do about falling into the realm of demons the moment a thought occurs?”

Yunyan said, “Why do you come from the realm of buddhas?”

The monk had no reply. Yunyan asked, “Do you understand?”

The monk said, “No.”

Yunyan said, “Don't hold the notion that you don't understand. Even if you thought you did understand, you'd still just be wandering between the realms.”

When Master Yunyan became ill at the end of his life, he instructed the head monk to prepare a feast for the next day, because a monk was leaving. That evening he passed away. His posthumous title was “Great Teacher No Abode.”

Cuiwei Wuxue (dates unknown)

The details of the early life of Master Cuiwei Wuxue are not recorded, but he studied with Master Danxia Tianran in Dengzhou (southern Henan) and became his most prominent disciple. (Danxia had been a disciple of Master Shitou, and was famous for having burnt a wooden buddha statue to keep warm). After his training with Master Danxia, Wuxue eventually settled and taught on Emerald Profound (Cuiwei) Mountain in the northern region of Jingzhou, in modern Shanxi Province.

One day when Master Cuiwei Wuxue was conducting a service in honor of the Lohans (awakened saints), the monk Daoying said, “Master Danxia burned a wooden buddha. Why, then, do you make offerings to these wooden statues?”

The master replied, “Even though he burned them, they can't be burned up completely. But if you want to make them an offering, they'll let you do so.”

Daoying asked, “If you make an offering to them, will they come?”

The master said, “Aren't you able to eat every day?”

Once the monk Lingzun asked Master Cuiwei, “What was the essential purpose of Bodhidharma's coming from India?”

The master said, “Wait until nobody's around; then I'll tell you.”

A little later Lingzun said, “There's no one around now – please, teacher, tell me.”

Cuiwei got down from his seat and led Lingzun into a bamboo grove. Then he just stood there silently. Lingzun said again, “Nobody's here – please tell me.”

The master pointed to the bamboo and said, “This bamboo is tall just so. This bamboo is short just so.”

One day Master Cuiwei was walking through the Teaching Hall. His student Datong came up to him, bowed, and said, “The essential purpose of Bodhidharma's coming from India – how does the master demonstrate this to people?”

The master stopped walking and stood there silently.

Datong said, “Please demonstrate it, master.”

The master said, “Do you want another ladle full of polluted water?”

Datong then bowed in thanks. The master said, “Don't make matters worse.”

Datong said, “It's the season when weeds grow everywhere.”

Other Descendants of Shitou

Master Longtan Chongxin was from Jiangling City in Hubei. Unlike most recorded masters, he didn't come from a family of the wealthy elite – his family made and sold rice cakes as their trade, and were perhaps of Central Asian descent. As they used to make regular donations of their cakes to the nearby Tianhuang Monastery, they eventually became friends with the master of the monastery, Tianhuang Daowu, who had been a disciple of Master Shitou.

Soon the young son of the family became a lay student of the master, and later was ordained as the monk Chongxin, and served as the master's attendant. After Master Tianhuang passed on, Chongxin moved to Hunan and built a small hermitage at the Dragon Pool (Longtan) Monastery in Fengyang, near his spiritual uncle Yaoshan Weiyan on Medicine Mountain. Here he began to attract students and teach.

Once a monk asked Master Longtan Chongxin, “Who is it who attains the jewel in the topknot?” (a sign of a great spiritual being).

Longtan replied, “The one who doesn't delight in it.”

The monk asked, “Where can we find the jewel?”

Longtan said, “If you make such a place, then you tell me, where is it?”

The Provincial Governor Li Ao, who often visited with Master Yaoshan, once came to see Master Longtan and asked, “What is the wisdom of true 'thusness'?”

The master said, “I have no wisdom of 'true thusness'.”

Li then said, “I am fortunate to have met you, master.”

The master said, “You still speak outside of the essential matter.”

Master Sanping Yizhong (781-872) was a disciple of Master Dadian Baotong who taught in Shaozhou in the far south (near Caoxi). Master Dadian had been one of the prominent students of Master Shitou.

After training with Master Dadian, the young Yizhong traveled to refine himself among many teachers. Once he visited Master Shigong Huizang, the disciple of Mazu who had been a hunter before becoming a monk. Master Shigong had a fierce reputation and was known to greet his visitors by aiming a bow and arrow at them. When Yizhong arrived before the master, he was greeted in this way. As the master drew back his arrow, Yizhong opened his robe, bared his chest, and said, “This arrow is for killing. What arrow gives life?”

Shigong lowered the bow and arrow. Yizhong made prostrations. Master Shigong then said, “After thirty years I've finally met half a sage.” Then he broke his bow.

Yizhong eventually settled down to teach at Triple Peace (Sanping) Mountain in Zhangzhou (in modern Fujian Province). Once he said to his community, “Just this very seeing and hearing goes beyond 'seeing and hearing', and there are no other sounds or forms to offer you. If you realize this right here, then nothing will be the matter.”

Master Shishi Shandao(781-872) was a disciple of Master Changzi Kuang, one of the prominent students of Master Shitou. Master Shishi lived and taught in the hermit-caves of Youxian in Hunan, the same area that his spiritual cousin Yunyan had settled in, and perhaps for some of the same time. (“Shishi “ means “stone chamber”). During the Buddhist persecution of 840-846, Master Shishi was said to have taken a job in a mill as a layman, and so was later often known as “Worker Shishi.”

When Master Shishi saw a new monk coming by, he was often known to hold up his staff and say, “Awakened ones of the past are just

this; awakened ones of the present are just this; awakened ones of the future are just this.”

Once Master Shishi was visited by the monk Huiji who asked, “Where does the roundness of the moon go when it's a sharp crescent? Where does the sharpness go when it's full and round?”

Shishi said, “When it's a sharp crescent the roundness is still there; when it's round the sharpness is still there.”

Guishan Lingyu (771-853)

Master Guishan Lingyu came from Fuzhou, in modern Fujian Province on the eastern seaboard of China. At the age of fifteen he left home to become a novice at a nearby temple. In his later teens he traveled to Hangzhou to receive full ordination at Dragon Rising Monastery, and there he stayed on to study scriptures and discipline for a few years. At the age of twenty-two, having become interested in finding a Zen teacher, Lingyu set out for the Hongzhou area in Jiangxi where the famous Master Ma had taught.

When Lingyu visited the Writing Pool Monastery on Stone Gate Mountain, where Master Ma had been buried six years before, he met the master Huaihai (who was the current teacher there) and became one of his first disciples. When Huaihai moved to Baizhang Mountain, Lingyu moved with him, and continued his studies with the master for more than ten years. For much of this time Lingyu served as head of the monastic kitchen.

Once Master Baizhang Huaihai asked Lingyu to see if there were any burning coals left in the fireplace. Lingyu, without checking it, said that the fire was completely out. The master then picked up the tongs, and, searching through the ashes, pulled out a glowing ember and showed it

to his disciple, saying, “What's this?” Lingyu then experienced a deep realization of the meaning of practice, and bowed to the master.

The next day, Lingyu accompanied Master Baizhang to do work on the mountain. The master asked, “Did you bring fire?”

Lingyu said, “I brought it.”

The master asked, “Where is it?”

Lingyu then picked up a stick, blew on it twice, and handed it to Baizhang.

The master approved.

After many years with Master Baizhang, Lingyu eventually left for solitary travel, heading west into Hunan. He settled in the Tanzhou region on Gui (or Dagui) Mountain, a sparsely inhabited area described as having steep cliffs, and where there were only monkeys for companions and wild chestnuts for food. Lingyu lived in a hermitage on the mountain for several years before his reputation slowly spread to the nearby villages, and from there to the regional government.

Eventually a monastery was built for him called Harmonious Celebration (Tongqing), and he began his formal teaching.

One day Master Guishan Lingyu entered the hall and sat on the teaching seat. A monk came forward and said, “Master, please expound the teaching for the community.”

Guishan said, “I have already expounded it exhaustively for you.”

The monk bowed.

Once a monk asked Master Guishan, “What is the way?”

Guishan said, “No-mind is the way.”

The monk said, “I don't understand.”

Guishan said, “It's good to understand not-understanding.”

The monk asked, “What is not-understanding?”

Guishan said, “It's just that you are not anyone else.”

One day Master Guishan called for the monastery director. When the director came, Guishan said, "I called the director. What are you doing here?"

The director said nothing.

Guishan then asked his attendant to get the head monk. When the head monk came, Guishan said, "I called for the head monk. What are you doing here?"

The head monk said nothing.

Once the monk Huiji asked Master Guishan, "When the hundreds and thousands of objects arrive all together, how is it?"

Guishan said, "Blue is not yellow; long is not short. All phenomena abide in their own positions, and don't cause me any concern."

Huiji bowed.

One day Master Guishan addressed the community saying, "There are many who have great capacity, but few who manifest great function."

Huiji went to visit a hermit who lived near the monastery and told him the master's words. Then he asked, "How do you understand the meaning?"

The hermit said, "Say it again and we'll see."

When Huiji began to speak, the hermit gave him a kick and knocked him over.

Later Huiji returned to the monastery and told Guishan what happened. The master laughed.

Once when the community was out on the hillside picking tea leaves, the master said to Huiji, "All day today I've heard your voice, but I've not seen you yourself. Show me yourself."

Huiji shook a tea bush.

The master said, "You attained it's function, but you haven't realized it's essence."

Huiji asked, "What would the master say?"

Guishan was silent.

Huiji said, "You, master, have attained it's essence, but haven't realized it's function."

The master said, "I spare you thirty blows of my staff."

One day Guishan said to Huiji, "I have a lay student who gave me three rolls of silk to buy a temple bell in order to spread happiness to all people."

Huiji asked, "What did you give him in return?"

Guishan hit the sitting platform three times and said, "This was my offering."

Huiji asked "How will that benefit him?"

Guishan again hit the platform three times and said, "Why don't you like this?"

Huiji said, "It's not that I dislike it, it's just that that gift belong to everyone."

Guishan said, "Since you know it belongs to everyone, why did you want me to repay him?"

Huiji said, "I just wondered how you understand that even as it belongs to everyone, you could still make it a gift.

Guishan said, "Don't you see? The great master Bodhidharma, coming from India, also brought a gift. We are always receiving gifts from others."

Once after sitting Guishan pointed at their straw sandals and said to Huiji, "All hours of the day we receive people's support. Don't betray them."

Huiji said, "Long ago in Sudatta's garden, the Buddha taught just this."

Guishan said, "That's not enough, say more."

Huiji said, "When it's cold, to wear socks for others is not prohibited."

During the Huichang persecution of Buddhism (841-846) Master Guishan was forced into hiding as a layman and his monastery was partially destroyed. When a more favorable regime returned to power, the influential minister Pei Xiu, recently having become a student of Guishan's spiritual brother Huangpo Xiyun, became a supporter of Master Guishan as well, and helped rebuild his temple. Around this time, Master Guishan wrote an essay about practice and discipline that has come to be known as "Guishan's Admonitions" (*Guishan Jingce*) and is among the most reliable surviving sources of the teaching of the Tang Dynasty Zen masters (see Part Two – Discourses). Master Guishan's reputation continued to grow, and he attracted numerous officials, as well as monks and nuns, to his monastery seeking advice and teaching.

The government official Commander Lu once came to visit the monastery at Guishan. On a tour of the monk's hall, he asked the master, "Among these monks, who are the meal servers and who are the meditators?"

The master said, "There are no meal servers and no meditators."

Lu asked, "Then what are they doing here?"

The master said, "Officer, you will have to find that out for yourself."

One day a twelve year old young woman, the thirteenth daughter of the Zheng family, came to study with Master Guishan, together with an older nun. When they entered the master's room, the elder nun made a full bow and stood up. The master asked, "Where do you live?"

The nun said, "Near the Nantai River."

The master shouted, then told her to leave. Turning to Zheng, the master asked, "Where does that woman behind you live?"

Zheng relaxed her posture, walked close to the master, and stood there with her hands joined.

The master repeated the question.

Zheng said, “Master, I have already told you.”
The master told her to leave as well.

One day Huiji went to see Master Guishan while the master was lying in bed. When Huiji came in the master sat up and said, “I just had a dream. Will you try to interpret it for me?”

Huiji got up, fetched a basin and a towel, filled the basin with water, and brought it to the master. Guishan washed his face, and arranged himself for sitting.

Just then the monk Zhixian came to see the master. Guishan said, “Huiji has just been demonstrating spiritual power by interpreting my dream. Now you give it a try.”

Zhixian immediately went out, made a cup of tea, and brought it back in to the master.

Guishan said, “The spiritual power and wisdom of you two surpass even Sariputra and Maudgalyayana.”

Once Master Guishan addressed the community saying, “After I have passed away I will become a water buffalo at the foot of this mountain.

On the left side of the buffalo will be written the characters 'Gui-mountain-monk-Ling-Yu.' You might say it's the monk of Guishan, but it will still be a water buffalo. You might say it's a water buffalo, but it will also be this monk of Guishan. What will you call me?”

Huiji came forward, made a deep bow, and walked away.

Do not say that I'll depart tomorrow
because even today I still arrive...

I am the frog swimming happily in the clear pond,
and I am also the grass snake who, approaching in silence,
feeds itself on the frog.

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones...
and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate,
and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving...

Please call me by my true names,

so I can hear all my cries and laughs at once,
so that I can see that my joy and pain are one.

 Please call me by my true names,
so I can wake up,
and so the door of my heart can be left open,
the door of compassion.

- Thich Nhat Hahn

Huangbo Xiyun (c.776-c..856)

Master Huangbo Xiyun came from the eastern coastal province of Fuzhou (modern Fujian) like his spiritual brother Guishan Lingyu. As a youth, he entered a local monastery on Yellow Corktree Mountain (Huangboshan). After full ordination he began to travel, living for a while on Mt. Tiantai, and also visiting the capital of Chang'an, where he was able to meet and receive instruction from Master Nanyang Huizhong. Eventually he made his way to Great Hero Mountain in Jiangxi to study with Baizhang Huaihai; who became his main teacher.

One day Master Baizhang asked Xiyun, “Where have you been?”

Xiyun said, “I've been picking mushrooms at the base of Great Hero Mountain.”

Baizhang asked, “Did you see a tiger?”

Xiyun roared

Baizhang picked up an ax and made as if to strike Xiyun. Xiyun hit him. Baizhang laughed and returned to his room.

Later when Master Baizhang was addressing the community he said, “At the base of Great Hero Mountain there's a tiger. You monks should go take a look at it. Just today, I, myself, suffered a bite from it.”

Xiyun also studied for a substantial period with Master Nanquan, and likely with Master Guizong (whom Xiyun later claimed was one of the

few legitimate successors to Master Ma). Eventually Xiyun settled down to teach in the district of Gao'an in the Hongzhou area of Jiangxi Province. He renamed the mountain above his monastery “Huangbo” after the mountain he had lived at in his youth as a novice. This became his teaching name.

Once Master Huangbo Xiyun said to the community, “All the elder masters in all the ten direction are right on top of this monk's staff.”

One monk who heard this soon departed and traveled to see a certain Master Dashu, to whom he repeated Master Huangbo's proclamation..

Dashu said, “Huangbo speaks thus, but has he already seen in all ten directions?”

The monk went back to Master Huangbo and relayed to him this response..

Huangbo said, “My words have already reached all ten directions.”

Langye Huijue said:

Dashu's response is like one who seems to have eyes, but is really blind. Even if everyone under heaven bites the one staff of Huangbo, it will not break.

Dogen Comments:

Langye speaks thus...(but) he was only able to say eighty or ninety percent. How could he have failed to say that when everyone under heaven bites through, it immediately breaks?

The teaching of Master Huangbo came to national prominence largely because of the efforts of the powerful government official Pei Xiu (787?-860). When Pei Xiu lived in the capital serving the Emperor Wenzong, he was a student of the influential Buddhist scholar and historian Zongmi (780-841). After this teacher's passing, and the change to the new emperor Wuzong, Pei Xiu was transferred to a post in the Hongzhou area of Jiangxi, where he had the opportunity to meet Master Huangbo. Deeply impressed, Pei became converted to the

master's radical understanding and expression of Zen, and invited the master to take up residence at the Dragon Rising Monastery in the prefectural capital of Zhongling. Here Pei received personal instruction, and began to record the master's teaching in his notebooks.

The new emperor, however, soon instituted the “Huichang” suppression of Buddhist activity and Pei's tutelage was interrupted.

During this Huichang persecution of 841-846, Master Huangbo spent time at the relatively safe monastery of the late National Teacher Yanguan Qi'an, helping with rituals. At that time Li Chen, the expected future emperor, was serving as a novice in the temple, keeping himself hidden in the monk's community until his political troubles ended.

Inquisitive about Zen, and knowing Master Huangbo's reputation, when he saw the master doing prostrations, he asked, “If we are not to seek anything from the Buddha, the sacred teaching, or the noble order, what does the master seek in doing prostrations?”

Huangbo replied, “Though not seeking anything from Buddha, the teaching, or the order, there's a tradition to show respect in this way.”

“But for what purpose?” continued the novice.

Huangbo slapped him.

The novice said, “That's crude.”

“What is this?” replied the master, “Making up distinctions between refined and crude?” Then he slapped him again.

After Li Chen assumed power as Emperor Xuanzong and the persecution came to an end, Pei Xiu received a post in Wanling (still in the Hongzhou region) and invited Master Huangbo to come and teach there at a monastery called Open Source. The master obliged, and Pei continued his work of copying down the master's teachings. The collection he eventually assembled and published (the first part from his earlier time with the master called “Transmission of the Heart Dharma Essentials”, and the second part from his later study period called the “Wanling Record”) remain today as one of the oldest surviving records

of the teachings and sayings of a prominent Tang Dynasty Zen master, and is, perhaps, the first with an extensive question and answer section, a form that later became the norm.

Once Minister Pei Xiu presented a book he had written about Zen to Master Huangbo for his feedback. The master glanced at it, then set it down on a table and sat down.

After a long pause the master asked, “Do you understand?”

Pei said, “I don't understand.”

The master said, “If it could be expressed like this with ink and paper, what would be the purpose of our school?”

Another time Minister Pei Xiu came to visit Open Source Monastery. When the head monk came to greet him, Pei pointed to a portrait on the wall and asked, “What is that?”

The monk said, “It's the portrait of a famous high priest.”

Pei said, “I can see the portrait, but where is the priest?”

The monk couldn't answer. Pei said, “Isn't there a Zen person in this monastery?”

The monk went to get Master Huangbo. When the master arrived Pei said, “I have a question, but no one's able to answer.”

The master said, “Please ask the question.”

Pei said, “The portrait can be seen, but where is the high priest?”

The master suddenly shouted, “Pei Xiu!”

Pei said, “Yes?”

The master said, “Where are you?”

Pei Xiu had an insight.

Master Huangbo eventually returned to his home monastery on Huangbo Mountain where he spent the last few years of his life. Once he entered the hall and said to the community, “What is it that you people are all searching for here? You are all just slurpers of the dregs of others. When you see a bunch of people gather somewhere, you go

there too. If you keep traveling around like this, when will you settle the matter of today? Don't you know that in all of Tang China there is not a single teacher of Zen?"

Then a monk came forward and asked, "What about those in all directions who are training students and leading communities?"

The master said, "I don't say that there is no Zen, just that there are no teachers."

Changqing Da'an (793-883)

Like his spiritual brothers Guishan and Huangbo before him, Master Changqing Da'an was also from the eastern region of Fuzhou. He was ordained on Yellow Cork Tree Mountain (the same Huangboshan where Master Huangbo had lived as a novice) and he remained there for some time to study the traditional codes of discipline for monks. When he grew weary with this approach and aroused an aspiration to study Zen, he traveled westward into Jiangxi and, again like Guishan and Huangbo, became a disciple of Master Baizhong Huaihai.

After training with Master Baizhang, Da'an returned to his native region and began to teach at Constant Celebration (Changqing) Monastery, where his reputation spread. When Master Guishan Lingyu passed away, Da'an was asked to take over teaching duties at Harmonious Celebration Monastery on Mt. Gui, and so, accepting the offer, he became the second abbot of that monastery, and was often known as Guishan Da'an. Among his disciples was the woman named Zheng who had had a spirited interview with Master Guishan Lingyu when she was only twelve, and who eventually became a master in her own right.

One day a monk asked Master Changqing Da'an, "All actions are the function of the body of ultimate truth. What is this body of ultimate truth?"

Master Da'an said, "All actions are the function of the body of ultimate truth."

Once a monk asked, "Apart from the five *skandhas*, what is the original body?"

Master Da'an said, "Earth-water-fire-air, sensation, perception, mental conception, and consciousness."

The monk said, "Aren't these the five skandhas?"

Da'an said, "They are not the five skandhas."

A monk once asked Master Da'an, "Where will you run to if the rebel warlord Huang Chao comes here with his troops?"

Da'an said, "Inside Skandhas Mountain."

The monk asked further, "What if they suddenly grab you?"

Da'an said, "Commander Distress!"

When monks tried to present insightful statements to Master Da'an, he often responded with a saying that soon became a famous teaching-phrase: "There is no such sword in my royal treasury."

When the monk Yicun was practicing with Master Da'an on Mt. Gui, he once found an unusual twisted stick in the woods that was shaped like a snake. He presented it to the master, exclaiming how it had naturally taken such a striking shape, without any human carving.

Da'an said, "Inhabitants of this mountain have no ax with which to carve it."

Zhaozhou Congshen (778-897)

Great Master Zhaozhou Congshen was from Caozhou in the northern province of Shandong. He became a novice as a young boy at a local temple, and while still in his teens he became determined to practice under a Zen master. At seventeen he left his home region and traveled south, ending up in Anhui Province. When he heard about Master Nanquan Puyuan living in the mountains of the Chizhou region, Congshen went to seek him out. He found the master still living in his hermitage high on South Spring Mountain.

As he entered the master's room, Nanquan was lying down resting. The master asked, "Where have you come from?"

Congshen replied, "I've just been staying at Sacred Icon Temple."

Nanquan asked, "Did you see the famous icon?"

Congshen said, "No, but I see a reclining buddha."

Nanquan sat up and asked, "Are you a novice with a teacher, or none?"

Congshen replied, "I have a teacher."

Nanquan asked, "Who is your teacher?"

Congshen said, "In the cold of this mid-winter, I am happy to see you enjoying good health, teacher."

Master Nanquan then accepted Congshen as his student.

One day Congshen asked Master Nanquan, "What is the way?"

Nanquan said, "Ordinary mind is the way."

Congshen asked, "Can I direct myself toward it?"

Nanquan said, "If you try to direct yourself towards it, you will be missing it."

Congshen asked, "If I don't try, how can I know it?"

Nanquan said, "The way has nothing to do with knowing or not knowing. Knowing is just illusion, not knowing is blankness. When you enter the way beyond trying, it is like the great sky, vast and clear. How can we speak of affirming or negating?"

At these words, Congshen had a deep realization.

When Master Nanquan accepted an invitation to lead a new monastery at the base of the mountain, Congshen took on the role of head monk. He remained a devoted disciple of Nanquan for the rest of the master's life – some thirty more years. When the master passed away, Congshen was already fifty-seven.

At this point Congshen decided to embark on a life of homeless wandering. Declaring that he would be open to learning from a seven year old girl, or teaching an eighty year old master, he began to travel throughout central and northern China visiting numerous famous teachers, as well as secluded hermits, continually sharpening his insight and clarifying his expression. He remained a wandering pilgrim for the next twenty years.

One day Congshen went to visit a hermit. When he approached the hermit's cave he called out, “Are you there? Are you there?”

The hermit stepped out and held up his fist without saying a word.

Congshen said, “The water's too shallow here; not a place to drop anchor.” Then he left.

Later he went to visit another hermit, and again called out, “Are you there? Are you there?”

This hermit came out and also just held up a fist. Congshen said, “You have the power to give and take away, to kill and to give life.” Then he bowed and went away.

Once Congshen went to visit the young teacher Daoying at his hermitage. Daoying said to him, “Great Elder, why don't you look for a place to settle down?”

Congshen replied, “What is the place where this person could dwell?”

Daoying said, “In front of this mountain there is the foundation of an ancient temple.”

Congshen said, “Honored priest, it would be good for you to live there yourself.”

Eventually, at the age of eighty, Congshen decided to rest his feet at a small, rundown temple in the city of Zhaozhou, in the northern province of Hebei. In this humble residence named after the bodhisattva of compassion Guanyin (Observing Sound), the master spent the rest of his life teaching a small community, and receiving a steady stream of guests. Turning down offers of expansion or improvement to his temple, the residents often numbered less than twenty. Unimpressed with wealth and social standing, when government officials came to visit, the master often remained in his seat, and when common folk came he was known to go out and meet them at the gate. As his reputation spread throughout the rest of his long life, countless pilgrims made their way to his northern outpost to receive his teaching.

Once Master Zhaozhou Congshen entered the hall and said to the assembly:

“Practitioners, if someone comes from the south, I unburden them; if someone comes from the north, I load them up. If you go to the one unburdened and ask about the way, you will lose the way. If you go to the one loaded up and ask about the way, you will gain the way.

“Practitioners, if a true person speaks a mistaken teaching, even the mistaken teaching becomes correct. If a false person speaks the correct teaching, even the correct teaching becomes false.

“At other places it's difficult to understand, but easy to embody. At this place it's easy to understand but difficult to embody.”

The master also said, “The essential matter is like a bright jewel in the palm of your hand. When a foreigner comes, a foreigner appears; when a local comes, a local appears.

“This old monk takes a blade of grass and makes it into the sixteen foot golden body of the Buddha. I also take the sixteen foot golden body and make it into a blade of grass. The Awakened One is delusion, delusions are the awakened one.”

Then a monk came forward and asked, “For whom is the Awakened One a delusion?”

Master Zhaozhou said, “It's the delusion of everybody.”

The monk asked, "How can we get rid of it?"
The master said, "Why should we get rid of it?"

Once Master Zhaozhou addressed the assembly saying, "I don't like to hear the word 'buddha.'"

A monk came forward and asked, "Then how does the master teach others?"

The master said, "buddha, buddha."

Once a monk asked Master Zhaozhou, "What is Buddha?"

The master said, "The one on the altar."

The monk said, "But isn't the one on the altar just a clay figure, made from mud?"

The master said, "Yes, that's right."

The monk asked, "Then what is Buddha?"

The master said, "The one on the altar."

Another time a monk asked Master Zhaozhou, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from India?"

The master said, "The cypress tree here in the garden."

The monk said, "Master, please don't teach me just using an object."

The master said, "I'm not teaching using an object."

The monk then asked again, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from India?"

The master said, "The cypress tree here in the garden."

One day a monk asked Master Zhaozhou, "Before there was this world, already there was original nature. When this world is destroyed, this nature will not be destroyed. What is this indestructible nature?"

The master said, "The four great elements and the five skandhas."

The monk replied, "These will also be destroyed. What is the indestructible nature?"

The master said, “The four great elements and the five skandhas.”

Once a monk asked Master Zhaozhou, “Does a dog have awakened nature?”

The master said, “Yes.”

The monk said, “If so, why does it enter into this difficult embodied life?”

The master said, “Although it knows, it intentionally transgresses.”

Another time a monk asked, “Does a dog have awakened nature?”

The master said, “No.”

The monk said, “But we've been taught that all living beings have Awakened Nature – why do you say that a dog doesn't have it?”

The master said, “Because of habitual conditioning.”

One day Master Zhaozhou asked a newly arrived monk, “Have you been here before?”

The monk said, “Yes, I've been here.”

The master said, “Have a cup of tea.”

Later he asked another monk, “Have you been here before?”

The monk said, “No, I've never been here.”

The master said, “Have a cup of tea.”

Then the temple director asked the master, “Why did you say 'Have a cup of tea' to the one who had not been here, as well as to the one who had?”

The master said, “Director!”

The director said, “Yes?”

The master said, “Have a cup of tea.”

Once a monk said to Master Zhaozhou, “I've just entered the community here – please, master, give me some instruction.”

The master asked, “Have you eaten breakfast?”

The monk said, “Yes, I've eaten.”

The master said, “Then wash your bowls.”

The monk had a deep realization.

In the city of Zhaozhou is a famous stone bridge of great antiquity. Once a monk came to see Master Zhaozhou and said, "For a long time I've heard of the stone bridge of Zhaozhou, but so far I've only seen a simple wooden bridge."

The master said, "You've only seen the wooden bridge. You haven't seen the stone bridge."

The monk asked, "What's the stone bridge like?"

The master said, "Donkeys cross, horses cross."

One day when Master Zhaozhou was wandering around town, he came across an old woman he knew carrying a basket. He immediately asked, "Where are you going?"

The old woman said, "I'm on my way to steal Master Zhaozhou's bamboo shoots."

Zhaozhou asked, "What will you do if you run into Master Zhaozhou?"

The old woman came up to the master and gave him a slap.

Once a messenger came to see Master Zhaozhou with a donation from an old woman who requested that the master perform the ritual of "rotating" the scriptures. The master got down from his seat, walked in a circle around the sitting platform, and then said to the messenger, "I have finished rotating the great scriptures."

The messenger returned to the old woman and told her what happened. She said, "I asked him to rotate the entire canon of scriptures. How come the master rotated only half the cannon?"

A nun once asked Master Zhaozhou, "What is the deeply secret heart?"

Zhaozhou took her hand and squeezed it.

The nun said, "Do you still have that in you?"
Zhaozhou said, "You have it, too."

One day when Master Zhaozhou was sweeping, a visiting layman said, "You are a great Zen Master – why are you sweeping?"

The master said, "Dust comes in from outside."

The man said, "This is a pure temple. Why is there dust?"

The master said, "Here comes some more!"

Once Master Zhaozhou's disciple Shanxin asked the master, "What do you do when nothing comes up?"

The master said, "Put it down."

Shanxin said, "When there's nothing that is coming up, how can you put it down?"

The master said, "Then carry it away."

Shanxin had a deep insight.

One day a monk asked, "How should we employ our minds throughout the twenty-four hours?"

Master Zhaozhou said, "You are used by the twenty-four hours; this old monk can use the twenty-four hours. Which twenty-four hours are you asking about?"

Once Master Zhaozhou addressed the community saying, "The great way is not difficult, just avoid picking and choosing.' As soon as words are present, there is choosing, and there is thinking. It's not to be found in thinking. Is thinking what you're upholding and sustaining?"

A monk came forward and asked, "Since it's not found in thinking, what should we uphold and sustain?"

The master said, "Don't know."

The monk continued, "Since the master doesn't know, how can you be sure it isn't within thinking?"

The master said, "Ask and you have an answer. Then bow and withdraw."

One day a monk came to bid farewell to Master Zhaozhou. The master asked, "Where are you going?"

The monk said, "I'm going to visit various places to study the way of awakening."

Zhaozhou said, "Be careful not to get stuck in a place where there is an awakened one. And quickly pass by a place where there is no awakened one. Whomever you meet, be sure not to misguide them."

After a pause the monk said, "Hearing that, I think I'll just stay here."

The master said, "Then go pick up the willow blossoms."

The city of Zhaozhou was close to the famous Buddhist pilgrimage site of Wutai Mountain. Along the pilgrimage route, many monks encountered an old woman who, whenever she was asked the way to the mountain, would always say, "Just go straight ahead." Then when the monk would walk on, she would always remark, "Another good monk goes off like that."

Eventually one of the monks told Master Zhaozhou about it. The master said, "Wait for a while, and I'll go and check her out."

The next day the master found the old woman on the road and asked, "Which way is the road to Wutai Mountain?"

The woman said, "Just go straight ahead." Then, as the master walked on, she said, "Another good monk goes off like that."

The master returned to the temple and said to the community, "I've checked out that old woman for you."

Once a monk asked Master Zhaozhou, "What is the road without mistakes?"

The master said, "Clarifying mind, seeing nature; that's the road without mistakes."

Shexian Guisheng said:

If someone asked me “what is the road without mistakes?”, I would tell them,
The inner gate of every house extends to Eternal Peace (Chang'an, the capital).

Once a monk who had stayed at Xuefeng Monastery in the south came to see Master Zhaozhou. Master Xuefeng Yicun, the teacher at this monastery, had risen to great prominence in his region. Master Zhaozhou asked the monk, “What is Master Xuefeng teaching these days?”

The monk reported that Xuefeng had said, “The whole world is the eye of a practitioner. Where will you take a shit?”

Master Zhaozhou replied, “If you return to Xuefeng, you should take a trowel.”

Once a visiting official asked Master Zhaozhou, “Is the master able to enter into the hell realms?”

The master said, “I entered the hell realms long ago.”

The official asked, “Why did you, a great Zen master, enter into hell?”

The master said, “If I didn't enter into hell, who would teach you?”

One day a monk asked Master Zhaozhou, “The ten thousand things all return to the one. To where does the one return?”

The master replied, “Back when I lived in Qingzhou I made a hemp robe that weighed seven pounds.”

Eventually, at the age of 120, Master Zhaozhou lay down on his right side and passed away. A layman had once asked the master how old he was, and the master had replied, “There are numberless beads on the string of a rosary.”

Changsha Jingcen (d.868)

The details of the early life of Master Changsha Jingcen are unknown, but he was a prominent disciple of Master Nanquan Puyuan.

After his training with Nanquan, Jingcen began teaching at a monastery in Changsha, the capital of Hunan. Although this was his base, Jingcen, like his spiritual elder brother Zhaozhou, liked to travel, and was said to have taught in many places throughout China. He had a reputation for dynamic behavior, as exemplified in this story of his visit with the monk Huiji (the disciple of Guishan):

Once Jingcen and Huiji were enjoying the moon. Huiji said, "Everyone is completely endowed with this, but they are unable to make use of it."

Jingcen said, "I invite you to make use of it right now."

Huiji said, "How would you use it?"

Jingcen then jumped on Huiji's back and knocked him down.

Huiji said, "Whoa, just like a tiger!"

From this time on, Jingcen had the nickname "Tiger Cen."

One day Master Changsha Jingcen entered the hall and addressed the community saying, "The whole world in ten directions is your own true eye; the whole world in ten directions is your own complete body; the whole world in ten directions is your own radiant light; the whole world in ten directions is the gate of liberation. Throughout the whole world in ten directions, there is not a single thing that is not you."

A monk came forward and asked, "What is 'our own true eye'?"

The master said, "So vast and wide that you can never leave it. Awakened ones and ancient sages can't leave it. Ordinary beings in the various realms of illusionary life also can't leave it."

The monk said, "I don't understand what it is that they can't leave."

The master said, "In the daytime, see the sun. In the nighttime, see the stars."

Once a monk asked Master Changsha, “What is the meaning of 'ordinary mind is the way'?”

The master said, “When I want to sleep, I sleep. When I want to sit, I sit.”

The monk said, “I don't understand.”

The master said, “When it's hot, I cool myself. When it's cold, I draw close to the fire.”

One day a monk asked Master Changsha, “Teachers of our order say to always remain sitting in the Seat of Awakening. What is this seat?”

The master said, “Just now I'm sitting. Just now you're standing.”

A monk once asked Master Changsha, “What is a *dharani*?” (a mystical, efficacious chant)

The master pointed to the left and said, “This monk is reciting the dharani.”

The monk asked, “Is there anybody else that can recite it?”

The master pointed to the right and said, “That monk is reciting it, too.”

The questioning monk then asked, “Why can't I hear it?”

The master said, “Haven't you heard that real chanting makes no sound, and in real listening there is no hearing?”

Kabir said:

Have you heard the music that no fingers

enter into?

Far inside the house

entangled music -

What is the sense of leaving your house?

...there is a dance no hands or feet dance.

No fingers play it, no ears hear it,

because the Holy One is the ear,

and the one listening too.

Once Master Changsha sent a monk to go check out a nearby hermit named Hui, who had spent some time with Master Nanquan. When the monk returned he reported that the hermit had just remained silent in response to the monk's questions. Master Changsha then shared a verse:

Atop a hundred-foot pole, an unmoving person.
Although he's found an entry, he hasn't reached the truth.
Take one step forward from the top of the pole,
and see that the entire world is the true human body.

Master Nanquan had a teaching phrase that said, “Coming and going within birth and death is exactly the body of truth.”

Master Zhaozhou's version was, “Coming and going within birth and death is exactly the true human body.”

Master Changsha said, “Coming and going within birth and death is exactly the true body of all the awakened ones.”

Dogen said:

Coming and going within birth and death is just coming and going within birth and death.

One day a monk asked Master Changsha, “How do you turn the mountains, rivers, and the great earth so as to return them to the self?”

The master said, “How do you turn the self so as to return to the mountains, rivers, and great earth?”

Once a monk asked Master Changsha, “What is the great way?”

The master said, “It doesn't exclude you.”

Dongshan Liangjie (807-869)

Master Dongshan Liangjie came from Zhejiang Province on China's eastern coast. As a youth he once read the Heart Sutra, and when he came to the words, “no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind...” he didn't just accept it, but wanted to understand the meaning. So he asked his tutor, “I have eyes, ears, a nose, and the rest. Why does this sacred scripture say there is none?”

His tutor, realizing he could not provide a true answer to his inquisitive student, said, “I can no longer be your teacher.” He then arranged for the youth to go study with the aged Master Wuxie Lingmo who lived in the region.

Master Wuxie had been one of the prominent disciples of Great Master Shitou . The youth became a novice under Wuxie, received the name Liangjie, and trained with the master until early adulthood. At the age of twenty-one, Liangjie took full monk's ordination at Shaolin Monastery on Mount Song. He then began to travel in order to meet and study with the many notable masters of his time.

The first teacher he visited was Master Nanquan. When he arrived at South Spring Mountain, the community was preparing for a memorial feast in honor of Nanquan's teacher Master Ma. That evening in a gathering, Master Nanquan asked the community, “Tomorrow we will have a feast for Master Ma, but will the master come or not?”

None of the resident monks were able to answer. Liangjie stepped forward and said, “He will come as soon as his companion is present.”

Nanquan, impressed, said, “Though he's young, he's a precious stone worthy of polishing.”

Liangjie heard the comment, and said, “Master, please don't make a virtuous servant (“Liangjie”) into a slave.”

Soon moving on, Liangjie headed west into Hunan and went to visit Master Guishan Lingyu. In an interview with the master Liangjie said, “I've heard that Master Nanyang Huizhong had said that inanimate beings can give spiritual teaching. I'm not sure I understand this clearly.” Master Guishan asked him to recount what he had heard, and so Liangjie told the story:

A monk once asked Master Nanyang, "What is the mind of the ancient

awakened ones?"

Nanyang said, "Fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles."

The monk asked, "Aren't fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles non-sentient?"

Nanyang said, "Yes."

The monk asked, "And they can expound the teaching?"

Nanyang said, "They expound it brilliantly, without ceasing."

The monk asked, "Why can't I hear it?"

Nanyang said, "You may not hear it, but that doesn't mean others can't hear it."

The monk asked, "Who can hear it?"

Nanyang said, "All the sages can hear it."

The monk asked, "Master, can you hear it?"

Nanyang said, "If I hear it, then I'm the same as the sages. Then you can't

hear me give the teachings. I expound the teachings for the sake of sentient beings,

not for sages."

The monk asked, "After sentient beings hear it, then what?"

Nanyang said, "Then they're not sentient beings."

When Liangjie finished the story, Master Guishan said, "I have this teaching, too, but one rarely finds a person who understands it."

Liangjie said, "I'm not clear about it. Could you please give some instruction?"

Guishan lifted his whisk upright and said, "Do you understand?"

Liangjie said, "I don't understand. Please explain."

Guishan said, "It can never be explained by the mouth that comes from our parents."

After a pause Liangjie said, “Is there anyone else you can recommend who might be able to clarify this for me?”

Master Guishan said, “You should go to Liling in the Youxian region and find the Cloud Cliff where there is a community of practitioners living in caves. There you'll find a man of the way named Master Tansheng of Yunyan. If you can push aside the grass and face into the wind, then I'm sure you'll find him worthy of respect.”

So Liangjie took his leave of Master Guishan, and sought out Master Yunyan. After he found the community at Cloud Cliff and was able to meet with the master, Liangjie related the story about non-sentient beings and asked, “Who can hear the teachings expounded by non-sentient beings?”

Master Yunyan said, “Non-sentient beings can hear the teachings expounded by non-sentient beings.”

Liangjie asked, “Master, can you also hear them?”

Yunyan said, “If I was hearing them, then you couldn't hear me expound the teachings”

Liangjie asked, “Why wouldn't I hear you?”

Yunyan then raised his whisk and asked, “Can you hear it yet?”

Liangjie said, “No, I can't.”

Yunyan said, “If you don't even hear me expounding the teaching, how can you expect to hear non-sentient beings expound the teaching?”

Liangjie was silent. Then he asked, “What scripture explains about non-sentient beings expounding the teaching?”

Master Yunyan said, “Haven't you read in the *Amitabha Sutra* the line, 'The lakes and rivers, the birds, the forests, they're all chanting of awakening, they're all chanting the teaching.'?”

Liangjie then had a realization. He later wrote a verse:

How wondrous! How incredible!

The teaching of the non-sentient is beyond conception.

If you listen with your ears, you can't understand.

When you hear with the eyes, then you'll see directly.

Liangjie decided to stay on to practice with Master Yunyan. He said to the master, "I have some habits that I've not yet been able to stop.

Do you recommend any particular practices?"

The master said, "What practices have you been doing?"

Liangjie said, "I'm not even practicing the four noble truths."

The master said, "Has this not-practicing been joyful?"

Liangjie said, "It's not without joy. It's like sweeping up shit into a huge pile, and then suddenly finding a precious jewel within it."

One day when Master Yunyan was making straw sandals, Liangjie approached and said, "I would like to see with the master's eyes."

Yunyan said, "Where have your own eyes gone?"

Liangjie said, "I've never had them."

The master said, "Suppose you did have them, where would you keep them?"

Liangjie said nothing.

The master said, "Isn't it the eye that desires eyes?"

"I don't have the eye," insisted Liangjie.

The master shouted, "Get out of here!"

Liangjie once asked Master Yunyan, "If I want to meet you, what should I do?"

Yunyan said, "Ask the master for an interview."

Liangjie said, "I'm doing that right now."

Yunyan said, "What is he saying to you?"

Eventually Liangjie decided to leave Master Yunyan's place and continue traveling. As he was preparing to leave, the master asked him, "Where are you going?"

Liangjie said, "Although I'm going, I don't know where I'll end up."

The master said, "If you leave, it will be difficult to meet again."

Liangjie said, "I feel it will be difficult not to meet."

The master didn't respond.

Just as Liangjie was about to depart, he asked the master, “If in the future someone asks if I have a true picture of Master Yunyan, how should I respond?”

After a long pause the master said, “Just this is it.”

Liangjie was silent.

Then Master Yunyan said, “Venerable Jie, now that you have taken on this great matter, you must pay very careful attention.”

Liangjie departed.

As Liangjie first set out on pilgrimage, he met an old woman on the road carrying water and asked her for some to drink. The old woman said, “I’ll let you have some, but I have a question first. Tell me, how dirty is the water?”

Liangjie said, “It’s not dirty at all.”

The old woman said, “Go away and don’t contaminate my water buckets!”

As he traveled Liangjie continued to have some doubt. Then one day as he was crossing a stream, he saw his reflection in the water and had a deep realization. Later he composed a verse to express it:

Don’t seek after other places, or the self will recede far away.

Now I walk alone, yet everywhere I meet it.

It’s no other than myself, yet “I” am not it.

You must see it like this to merge with “suchness.”

Liangjie visited for a while with Master Yuanzhou Daoming, who had been a disciple of Master Ma. When Liangjie was ready to continue on, Master Yuanzhou said, “Make a thorough study of the Way of Awakening, and broadly benefit the world.”

Liangjie said, “I have no question about studying the Way of Awakening, but what is it to broadly benefit the world?”

Yuanzhou said, “Not to disregard a single being.”

Next Liangjie went to visit Master Jingzhou Xingping, another disciple of Master Ma who lived in the capital. When Liangjie arrived and made his prostrations, Master Jingzhou said, “You shouldn't honor an old dotard.”

Liangjie said, “I'm honoring one who is not an old dotard.”

Jingzhou said, “Those who are not old dotards don't accept honoring.”

Liangjie replied, “Neither do they obstruct it.”

When Liangjie was taking his leave of Master Jingzhou, the master asked, “Where will you go?”

Liangjie said, “I'll just roam about, without any fixed place to stop.”

Jingzhou asked, “Will it be the “Truth-Body” or the “Complete Enjoyment-Body” that roams about?”

Liangjie said, “I would never explain it that way.”

Master Jingzhou clapped his hands.

Liangjie finally settled down and began to teach at a monastery on Cave Mountain (Dongshan) in the Ruizhou region of Jiangxi. As Master Yunyan had passed away, Liangjie, now called Master Dongshan, arranged a memorial feast to honor him. During the feast a monk asked, “When you were with Master Yunyan what teaching did he give you?”

Master Dongshan Liangjie said, “Although I was there I didn't receive any teaching.”

The monk said, “If you didn't receive any teaching from him, why are we having this feast to honor him?”

Dongshan said, “Why should I turn my back on him ?”

The monk asked further, “You studied earlier with Master Nanquan; why is it Yunyan that we are honoring?”

Dongshan said, “It is not my former master 's virtue or teachings that I honor, it's that he did not make explanations for me.”

The monk continued, “But do you approve of his teachings?”

Dongshan said, “Half approve, half not approve.”

The monk said, “Why don't you completely approve?”

Dongshan said, “If I completely approved then I would be ungrateful to my late master.”

After Dongshan had made offerings to a painting of Master Yunyan, another monk asked, “You've told us that Master Yunyan said, 'Just this is it.' What was his meaning?”

Dongshan said, “At that time I didn't fully understand.”

The monk asked, “Did the late master fully understand 'just this'?”

Dongshan said, “If he didn't understand, how could he have said those words? If he did understand, how could he have said those words?”

Once Master Dongshan gave a talk to the community and said, “You should understand the one who goes beyond buddha.”

A monk asked, “Who is it who goes beyond buddha?”

The master said, “Not buddha.”

Yunmen comments:

He couldn't move it or attain it, so he calls it “not.”

Fayan comments:

Through skillful means it is called “buddha.”

Master Dongshan also said to the community, “To experience the matter of going beyond the awakened ones, you must be capable of a little speech.”

A monk asked, “What is speech?”

The master said, “At the time of speaking, you don't hear.”

The monk said, “Master, do you hear?”

The master said, “When I'm not speaking, then I hear.”

Once a monk came to see Master Dongshan after practicing with Master Daci Huanzhong, a disciple of Baizhang Huaihai. Master Dongshan asked the monk, “What teachings does Master Daci have?”

The monk said, “Once in a talk Master Daci said, 'To speak one yard does not equal practicing one foot. To speak one foot does not equal practicing one inch.'”

Dongshan said, “I wouldn't say it that way.”

The monk asked, “How would you say it?”

Dongshan said, “Practice that which cannot be spoken. Speak that which cannot be practiced.”

Dogen said:

“Practice that which cannot be practiced, and speak what cannot be spoken.”

Master Dongshan asked this same monk about the other words of Master Daci. The monk told of his parting conversation with the master:

Master Daci asked, “Where are you going?”

The monk said, “To Jiangxi.”

Daci asked, “May I trouble you with a request?”

The monk asked, “What is it?”

Daci said, “Would you mind taking this old monk with you?”

The monk answered, “There is already someone who surpasses you, teacher, but I can't even take that person.”

Master Daci then left to take a rest.

When Dongshan heard the story he asked, “Why did you answer the master like that?”

The monk asked, “How would you have answered, master?”

Dongshan said, “All right, I'll take you.”

One day a monk asked Master Dongshan, “When the cold season comes, where can we go to escape it?”

The master said, “Why not go to the place where cold or hot do not reach?”

The monk asked, “Where is the place where cold or hot do not reach?”

The master said, “When it's cold, you die of cold. When it's hot, you die of heat.”

Dogen said:

If the greatest cold does not penetrate into our bones, how will the fragrance of the plum blossoms pervade the entire universe?

Once the monk Kuangren asked Master Dongshan, “In words that have not yet been spoken, master, please give me some teaching about realization.”

The master said, “I never say that there's anyone who can't realize it.”

Kuangren asked, “Can it be realized through practice or not?”

The master said, “Are you realizing it right now through practice?”

One day a monk said to Master Dongshan, “You often tell us to follow the 'bird path.' I wonder what this 'bird path' is.”

The master said, “It's where one does not encounter a single person.”

The monk asked, “How does one follow such a path?”

The master said, “One should go without hemp sandals on one's feet.”

After a pause the monk asked, “If one follows the bird path, isn't that seeing one's original face?”

The master said, “Why are you turning things upside down?”

The monk asked, “How have I turned things upside down?”

The master said, “Okay, if you haven't turned things upside down, why do you regard the servant as master?”

After another pause the monk asked, “What is our original face?”

The master said, “Not to follow the bird path.”

When the monk Xiujing was practicing with Master Dongshan, he once told the master, “I still cannot see the essential path - I'm still not free of discriminating thinking.”

The master said, “Do you think there is such a path?”

Xiujing, after some thought, said, “No, I don't think there is such a path.”

The master said, “Where did you acquire your discriminating thinking?”

Xiujing said, “I ask you that with all sincerity.”

The master said, “Why don't you go to the place where there is no grass for ten thousand miles?”

Xiujing asked, “How can I go to such a place?”

The master said, “Go directly! Right now!”

At the end of a summer practice period, Master Dongshan told the community, “As summer ends and autumn begins, go straight to a place where there is not an inch of grass for ten thousand miles.”

No one in the community made a response. Later, a monk told Master Shishuang Qingzhu about this. Shishuang said, “Why didn't you say, 'one step outside the gate there is grass everywhere.'?”

Master Dongshan had a good friend who had been a fellow student with him under Master Yunyan. His name was Sengmi, from Sacred Mountain (Shenshan), and the two would often visit and travel together.

Once Sengmi was mending clothes when Dongshan came by.

Dongshan asked, “What are you doing?”

Sengmi said, “I'm sewing.”

Dongshan asked, “What is sewing?”

Sengmi said, “Each stitch follows the other.”

Dongshan said, “If my companion of twenty years says so, I guess there's some point.”

Sengmi said, “What would you say, elder brother?”

Dongshan said, “Each stitch is like the earth exploding!”

Dongshan and Sengmi were once crossing a river. Dongshan said, "Don't make a mistake with your steps and fall into the current."
Sengmi said, "If I make a mistake, I won't be alive to cross the river."
Dongshan said, "What is the path without mistakes?"
Sengmi said, "Crossing the river with the elder."

One day a monk asked Master Dongshan, "Since the master has entered the world to teach, how many people have acknowledged you?"
"Not a single person has acknowledged me," replied the master.
"Why hasn't anyone acknowledged you," asked the monk.
The master said, "The realm of each person's mind is like the realm of a sovereign."

Once when Master Dongshan was washing his bowls with another monk, they both saw two birds contending over a frog. The monk asked, "Why does it have to come to this?"
The master said, "It's only for your benefit, venerable."

At the end of his life Master Dongshan became sick. A monk came and asked him, "Even as the master is sick, is there still someone who doesn't get sick?"

The master said, "There is."

The monk asked, "Can the one who doesn't get sick treat the master?"

The master said, "I'm able to see him."

The monk asked, "What do you see?"

The master said, "At that time, I don't see any sickness."

When Master Dongshan was close to death, he had the monastery bell rung to summon the community for a last farewell. When he had appeared to pass away, some monks expressed despair and some began

to sob. Suddenly the master opened his eyes and said, “Home-leavers aren't attached to things! That is their authentic practice. Why lament over changes?”

The master then instructed the monastery director to organize a feast in a week's time. It was to be called a “delusion feast.” Master Dongshan spent seven more days with the community, and joined them for this final meal. Then he said, “Don't make a big fuss about it. When I pass away, don't go carrying on.”

The master then returned to his room, sat upright, and passed away.

Shishuang Qingzhu (807-888)

Master Shishuang Qingzhu came from Xingan City in central Jiangxi. After ordination at age twenty-three, Qingzhu, like most monks, first studied monastic discipline (vinaya), but soon turned his attention to Zen practice. Looking for a teacher, he traveled to Gui Mountain in Hunan to study with Master Guishan Lingyu, and was put to work in the kitchen.

One day Qingzhu was in the storehouse sifting rice. Master Guishan came in and said, “Food from donors should not be treated carelessly.”

Qingzhu said, “It's not being treated carelessly.”

The master reached down and picked up a single grain of rice that had fallen on the floor and said, “Where did this come from?”

Qingzhu did not reply. The master said, “Don't take for granted even this single grain. A hundred thousand grains can be born from this one grain.”

Qingzhu said, “A hundred thousand grains can be born from this one grain, but where did this one grain come from?”

The master laughed and went back to the abbot's room. Later in the evening he gave a talk to the community and said, “Great assembly!

This afternoon I discovered a worm in the rice!”

After a year on Gui Mountain, Qingzhu decided to check out some of the other teachers in the area. He first stopped in at the community of Master Yunyan Tansheng, a friend of Master Guishan's, and then traveled on to Yunyan's brother Master Daowu Yuanzhi. When Qingzhu first met Master Daowu, he asked, "What is the transcendent wisdom that meets the eye?"

Master Daowu called out to a nearby attendant and instructed him to add some water to the pitcher. Then, after a pause, he said to Qingzhu, "What did you ask?"

Qingzhu started to repeat the question, but the master just got up and left the room.

Qingzhu then had a deep realization.

After several years of studying with Master Daowu, and becoming the master's most prominent student, Qingzhu decided to return to lay life, and lived as a potter's assistant in the town of Liuyang, near Changsha, Hunan. After many years, Master Dongshan Liangjie, who was likely friends with Qingzhu from their training days (as Dongshan had lived nearby at Yunyan's place), once sent a monk to seek out Qingzhu and study with him. Soon after Qingzhu began to be recognized as an adept, and eventually he returned to monastic life and began to teach at Stone Frost (Shishuang) Mountain in the same region of Hunan as all of his teachers. He remained there for the last twenty years of his life, encouraging his students to devote themselves particularly to sitting practice.. As many of his students sat for long hours, often deep into the night and then sometimes even sleeping in the sitting posture, his community gained a reputation for quiet stillness, and was nicknamed the "Dead Tree Assembly." The master's reputation eventually reached the capital, and he was invited to receive imperial honors, but he declined them and remained at his mountain refuge.

Once a monk asked Master Shishuang Qingzhu, “How is our true nature like empty space?”

The master replied, “When we lie down it's there; when we sit it's not there.”

Dogen said:

What is the meaning of Shishuang saying that when we lie down it's there?

When the jewel wheel functions and turns, we laugh out loud.

What is the meaning of Shishuang saying that when we sit it's not there?

Right here we meet without knowing each other.

One day a monk asked Master Shishuang, “Is the intention of our ancestor Bodhidharma contained within the scriptures?”

The master said, “It's there.”

The monk asked, “What is this intention of our ancestor within the scriptures?”

The master said, “Don't search for it within those pages.”

Once when Master Shishuang was in the abbot's room, a monk just outside the door asked, “Master, why is it that you're so near, yet I can't see your face?”

The master said, “In the entire universe nothing is concealed.”

Later this monk traveled to the monastery of Master Xuefeng Yicun, and when meeting with Xuefeng he said, “Master Shishuang said that in the entire universe nothing is concealed. What does this mean?”

Master Xuefeng said, “There's no place that isn't Shishuang.”

When Shishuang heard of this he said, “What kind of blasphemy is that fellow blathering?”

When Xuefeng heard of this he said, “My mistake.”

Master Shishuang had a younger Dharma brother, a fellow student of Master Daowu's, named Zhongxing. Shishuang had been a mentor to him, helping him to clarify his understanding, and when Zhongxing

became a teacher he remained in the same region as his older friend, settling on Flowing Headwaters (Jianyuan) Mountain.

Once Master Jianyuan Zhongxing was sitting behind a paper curtain. A monk came up, opened the curtain, and said, “How are you?”

Jianyuan just looked at the monk. After a while he said, “Do you understand?”

The monk said, “No, I don't.”

Jianyuan said, “How come you don't understand the matter before all the awakened ones?”

Jiashan Shanhui (805-881)

Master Jiashan Shanhui was from the southern region of Guangzhou. Leaving home at a young age, he soon became an ardent student of the scriptures and commentaries. After ordination he became recognized as a respected scholar, and eventually received an appointment as a lecturer at Bamboo Grove (Zhulin) Monastery in the eastern coastal province of Jiangsu.

One day when Shanhui was giving a lecture a monk came up and asked, “What is the body of ultimate truth?”

Shanhui said, “The body of ultimate truth is without form.”

The monk asked, “What about the eye of truth?”

Shanhui said, “The eye of truth is clear without flaw.”

At that moment Master Daowu Yuanzhi, who was visiting this monastery at that time and had been sitting quietly in the back of the hall, began to laugh. Shanhui, shaken, descended from the lecture seat and asked the master what his mistake was. Master Daowu said, “Although you've become a lecturer at this impressive monastery, you've not yet met a true teacher.”

Shanhui asked the master for instruction, but Daowu only said, “I have a spiritual brother who lives not so far from here on the banks of the Wu River at Huating. He operates a ferry boat there, and people

just call him the “boat master.” It would be most fitting for you to go see him.”

Shanhui immediately dismissed the assembly. He then packed his bag and left for Huating.

The “boat master” (Chuanzi) had been the monk Decheng when he lived for thirty years on Medicine Mountain, training with Master Yaoshan together with his friends Yuanzhi and Tansheng. When he left the mountain he said to his companions, “My nature is undisciplined; I like the outdoors and doing as I please. I’m not fit to lead a monastery. But if you one day find someone of ability who might be suitable to study with me, please send them my way so I can repay the kindness of our late master.” Then he left and began a life of wandering, eventually settling in Huating (near modern day Shanghai) and becoming a ferry boat driver.

Shanhui found Chuanzi at the Huating ferry landing, and the two got in the boat and rowed out into the river. Chuanzi said, “Venerable, what monastery do you live at?”

Shanhui said, “I don’t live in a monastery. Where I live is ‘not like this.’”

Chuanzi said, “What do you mean by ‘not like this’?”

Shanhui said, “It’s not the phenomena before your eyes.”

Chuanzi said, “Where did you learn these teachings?”

Shanhui said, “Not a place where eyes or ears can reach.”

Chuanzi said, “When you hold onto phrases like that, they’re just stakes that tie up the donkey for countless eons.” Shanhui said nothing.

Then Chuanzi said, “I’ve let down a fishing line a thousand feet deep into the pool of mind. You’re just a few inches shy of the hook. Why don’t you say something?”

As Shanhui started to open his mouth to speak, Chuanzi suddenly pushed him off the side of the boat into the river. As he tried to climb back into the boat, Chuanzi shouted, “Speak! Speak!” When Shanhui

hesitated, Chuanzi pushed him again into the water. This time Shanhui had a deep realization.

Noticing his changed expression, Chuanzi let him climb back into the boat. Then the master said, "Now you can have the fishing pole; the fishing line moves at your wish. Let the mind be natural, without disturbing the clear waves. What can you say?"

Shanhui said, "There's no way for words to be sensible. The tongue moves but nothing is said."

Chuanzi said, "Having fished all over the waves for a long time, finally today the golden-scaled fish is found."

Shanhui covered his ears. Chuanzi said, "Just so. Just so."

When they had rowed back to the shore, Chuanzi said, "From now on don't stay in cities or towns, but keep yourself where you leave no traces...and even where you leave no traces, do not keep yourself.

Cultivate fields in the deep mountains, training one, or at least half a person, and continue the teaching without letting it become extinguished."

Shanhui made farewell prostrations, then departed up the road.

Occasionally he turned to look back, and saw the master rowing his boat back out into the river. When Chuanzi caught his gaze, he shouted out to Shanhui, "Venerable, is there something more?" Then the master overturned the boat and disappeared into the mist and waves.

Honoring Chuanzi's advice, Shanhui settled into a secluded mountain hermitage and focused on solitary practice. But soon some monks discovered him, requested teachings, and were deeply impressed. They built huts nearby so as to continue their study with him, and eventually, as his reputation spread, the wooded hillside around Shanhui's hermitage was covered with the thatched huts of forest monks and yogins. Finally Shanhui was invited to take on the abbotship of a monastery on Jia Mountain in the Fengzhou region of Hunan, and he moved there together with his already substantial community.

One day Master Jiashan Shanhui entered the hall and addressed the assembly saying, “Before your eyes there is no phenomena. There is nothing in front of you. Only mind exists. It cannot be grasped by eyes or ears.”

Once a monk asked Master Jiashan, “There has always been meaning attached to the verbal teachings of the Awakened Ones and the ancient sages. Why does the master tell us that there isn't any?”

The master said, “If you fast for three years, you won't see hunger in yourself or anyone.”

The monk said, “If no one is hungry, why don't I experience awakening?”

The master said, “Because you have deluded ideas about awakening.”

Then the master offered a verse:

Clear and luminous, awakening has no teaching.

The idea 'awakening' only confuses people.

Here in paradise with two feet and two eyes,
nothing false and nothing true.

Touzi Datong (819-914)

Master Touzi Datong came from Shuzhou in Anhui Province.

Leaving home as a young man, he had an unusual early focus on the meditation techniques of the Anapana Sutta, and then later studied the Flower Garland Sutra. Finally he became interested in Zen teaching, and he traveled to the northwestern province of Shanxi to study with Master Cuiwei Wuxue in Jingzhou. After developing a clear understanding with Master Cuiwei, Datong traveled widely throughout China, but he eventually returned to his home region and settled in a hermitage on Child of Devotion (Touzi) Mountain. Here he practiced in relative obscurity for many years. But one day Master Zhaozhou Congshen, during his extensive wanderings, managed to hear of him and came for a visit.

When Congshen arrived at Touzi's hermitage no one was home, so Congshen waited. Eventually Touzi returned carrying a jug of oil.

Congshen said, "I've heard about the host of Touzi Mountain, but since coming here all I've seen is an old man selling oil"

Touzi replied, "You only see an old man selling oil. You haven't recognized Touzi."

Congshen asked, "What is Touzi?"

Touzi lifted up the jug and called out, "Oil! Oil!"

Later Congshen asked Touzi, "What do you say about attaining life after the great death?"

Touzi said, "It's not allowed to travel in the dark of night. You must arrive in daylight."

As Touzi's reputation began to spread, many students began to gather on the mountain and build hermitages there in order to study with the master. Eventually the local officials had a monastery built for Master Touzi to lead, and the master taught there for the rest of his life.

Soon after the monastery was completed, Master Touzi entered the hall to address the community. A monk came forward and asked, "What are the causes and conditions of this single great matter?"

The master said, "Minister Yin asked me to open the hall and give a talk."

Once a monk asked Master Touzi, "In all the teachings of the scriptures, is there any one particularly special or important matter?"

The master said, "Putting the teachings of the scriptures into practice."

One day a monk asked Master Touzi, “Among the ten aspects of the Awakened One, what is the one called the 'Harmonizing Guide of Beings'?”

The master got down from the teaching seat and stood with folded hands.

Another time a monk asked, “What is the distance between ordinary beings and the sages?”

The master got down from his seat and stood with folded hands.

On the first full moon gathering of the new year, a monk asked Master Touzi, “What is meant by the 'first moon'?”

The master said, “In early spring it is still cold.”

Then the monk asked, “What is the 'second moon'?”

The master said, “In mid-spring it gradually warms.”

One day a monk asked Master Touzi, “What is the last word?”

The master said, “The word you didn't understand at the beginning.”

Deshan Xuanjian (780-865)

Master Deshan Xuanjian came from the northern region of Jianzhou in the far western province of Sichuan. As a young monk he first made extensive studies of monastic discipline, and then turned his attention to studying the “Mind-Only” (Vijnanavada) School of Philosophy, as well as becoming an expert on the Diamond Sutra, a scripture usually associated with the “Middle Way” (Madhyamika) School. He became a respected scholar, and for many years made a career as a lecturing priest. Eventually becoming intrigued by the Zen movement, he traveled to Hunan to seek out a master.

One day during Xuanjian's travels he came across an old woman selling steamed dumplings on the side of the road. Stopping for a rest,

he set down his heavy pack and asked the woman for some dumplings. The old woman pointed to the bundles of manuscripts tied to his pack and asked, "Venerable, what is that you're carrying?"

Xuanjian said, "They're commentaries on a scripture."

The woman asked, "Which scripture are they about?"

Xuanjian said, "The Diamond Sutra."

The woman said, "I have a question for you. If you can answer, I'll give you some dumplings for free. But if you can't answer, you'll have to find something elsewhere. Okay?"

Xuanjian said, "Go ahead and ask."

The woman said, "In the Diamond Sutra it says that the mind of the past can't be grasped, the mind of the future can't be grasped, and the mind of the present can't be grasped, either. So with what mind is the venerable asking for dumplings?"

Xuanjian was speechless.

The old woman then suggested that he seek out Master Longtan Chongxin at the nearby Dragon Pool Temple for guidance. (The old woman had probably been a student of Master Longtan's. The master, because of his humble background as a rice-cake seller, was, perhaps, particularly open to teaching people from all classes and backgrounds).

Xuanjian took the advice and headed toward the Dragon Pool.

When he arrived at the temple, Xuanjian sought out Master Longtan, and on first meeting him said, "I've been hearing about the Dragon Pool, but now that I've arrived I see no pool, and no dragon has appeared."

The master replied, "Ah, you've truly arrived at Dragon Pool."

That evening Xuanjian was invited to the abbot's room. He talked extensively about Buddhist philosophy until Master Longtan finally said, "It's getting late. You should go now." So Xuanjian said good night and stepped outside. But finding it too dark to make his way, he asked the master for a lamp. The master lit a lantern and brought it out, but just as Xuanjian reached out to take it, the master blew it out. At

that moment Xuanjian had a deep awakening. He then made a deep bow to the master.

The master said, “What did you see that makes you bow?”

Xuanjian said, “From now on, I'll never doubt the teaching of the venerable master.”

The next morning Xuanjian piled all his scholarly texts in front of the Teaching Hall. Lifting a torch he said, “All these abstract doctrines are like a single hair in vast emptiness. All the affairs of the world are like a drop of water in a boundless ocean.” Then he burned them all.

While spending many years with Master Longtan, Xuanjian traveled around the region and met other teachers, receiving guidance particularly from Master Guishan Lingyou. Sometime after the Huichang era persecution came to an end, Xuanjian made an impression on some regional officials, and the Prefect of Wuling in southern Hunan invited him to become the abbot of a newly restored monastery on Virtue Mountain (Deshan). Here he remained as master for the rest of his life, supposedly attracting hundreds of students, and becoming famous for a direct, physical, and even fierce teaching style.

Once a monk asked Master Deshan Xuanjian, “What is awakening?”

Deshan struck him with his staff and said, “”Get out, don't defecate here!”

Then the monk asked, “What is Buddha?”

The master said, “An old beggar in India.”

One day Master Deshan said to the community, “As soon as you ask, you've missed it. If you refrain from asking, you've also missed it.”

Then a monk came forward and made a bow.

The master hit him.

The monk said, “I haven't even asked anything yet. Why did you hit me?”

The master said, “What difference would it make if I'd waited until you spoke?”

When Master Deshan became sick at the end of his life, a monk asked him, “Is there one who is not sick?”

The master said, “Yes.”

The monk asked, “What about the one who is not sick?”

The master moaned, “Uuugh. Uuugh.”

Muzhou Daoming (780-877)

Little is known about the early life of Master Muzhou Daoming, but he was a prominent disciple of Master Huangbo Xiyun, and served as the head monk at Huangbo's monastery in Jiangxi. After training with master Huangbo, Daoming settled at the Dragon Rising (Longxing) Monastery in his home town of Muzhou (in eastern Zhejiang Province) and began to teach.

Master Muzhou soon gained a reputation for a severe teaching style. It was said that he could tell the disposition of a student by the student's footsteps as he approached the master's room. When the student came near, Muzhou was known to slam the door shut and shout, “Nobody's here!”

Once the Master Muzhou Daoming ascended the hall to give a talk and said, “Since I've been abbot, I've never seen someone without an issue come before me. Why can't one of you come forward?”

A monk then came forward. Muzhou said, “The monastery director isn't here, so take yourself out the front gate give yourself twenty hits with the staff.”

The monk asked, “What did I do wrong?”

Muzhou said, “Your head’s already in a prisoner’s stock, and now you’re putting your hands in shackles.”

Master Muzhou once asked a newly arrived monk, “Where have you come from?”

The monk shouted.

Muzhou said, “That’s a shout on me.”

The monk shouted again.

Muzhou said, “Three shouts, four shouts...what then?”

The monk said nothing.

Muzhou struck him and said, “You thieving phony!”

Once a lecturing priest who had received imperial honors came to visit Master Muzhou. The master asked him, “What doctrine do you expound?”

The priest said, “The Consciousness-Only (Vijnanavada) doctrine.”

Muzhou said, “What do you say about it?”

The priest said, “The three worlds are mind only. All the myriad phenomena are only consciousness.”

Muzhou pointed to the screen door and asked, “What’s that?”

The priest said, “A form phenomena.”

Muzhou said, “You received a purple robe and taught scripture to the emperor. Why can’t you uphold the five precepts?”

The priest couldn’t answer.

One day the head monk came to Master Muzhou for an interview. Muzhou asked, “Can you expound on the Consciousness-Only doctrine?”

The monk said, “I dare not.”

Muzhou said, ‘In the morning traveling to the the Western Pure Land. In the evening, returning to the land of Tang China. Do you understand?’

The monk said, “No, I don’t understand.”

Muzhou said, “Oh! Breaking the five precepts!”

Once Master Muzhou asked a visiting scholar, “What scripture do you specialize in?”

The scholar said, “The Book of Changes” (*Yijing*)

Muzhou said, “In the Book of Changes it says, ‘Families use it everyday and yet do not understand it.’ What is it that they don’t understand?”

The scholar said, “They don’t understand the Way.”

Muzhou asked, “How do you understand the Way?”

The scholar couldn’t respond.

Muzhou said, “Just as I suspected - no understanding.”

At some point in later life the master left the monastery and returned to a lay lifestyle, living in his family home and supporting himself by fixing sandals. As his family name was Chen, he became known to many as Honored Elder Chen, and he continued to teach those devoted students who sought him out. His long life and teaching career lasted even to an important role in the early life of the famous master Yunmen Wenyan.

Linji Yixuan (d. 867)

Master Linji Yixuan was from the region of Caozhou, in the northeastern province of Shandong. After becoming a monk and studying the usual subjects of monastic discipline and scriptures, Yixuan became interested in the Zen movement then flourishing in the south, and he set off for the Zen heartland in Jiangxi and Hunan.

Arriving in the Gao'an region of northern Jiangxi, Yixuan entered the monastery on Yellow Corktree Mountain to study with Master Huangbo Xiyun.

Yixuan practiced wholeheartedly but never went to see Master Huangbo. After a while the head monk Daoming (later of Muzhou) asked him why he never met with the master. Yixuan said, "I don't know what to ask him."

Daoming said, "Why not just ask him about the essence of the way of awakening?"

So Yixuan went to see the master and asked this question. The master simply struck him with his staff. When Yixuan reported this to Daoming, the head monk encouraged him to go try again. Two more times Yixuan went to see the master, and two more times he was struck.

Finally Yixuan said to Daoming, "You kindly advised me to ask for teaching from the master, but each time I asked I was hit. I must have deep inner obstructions that keep me from understanding his teaching. So today I'll be leaving."

Daoming told Yixuan that if he was leaving he should first go see the master once more just to say farewell. So Yixuan went back to the abbot's room to take his leave of the master. When the master heard that he was leaving, he said, "You don't have to go far to find another teacher. Just go to nearby Gao'an Monastery and check out Master Dayu. I think he'll be able to help you." Yixuan took the advice and headed out to meet this new teacher.

Master Gao'an Dayu was a disciple of Master Guizong Zhicheng, who was one of the most prominent students of Master Ma. After Yixuan arrived at the Gao'an monastery, he soon requested to see the master. At their meeting the master first asked where he was from, and Yixuan told him he had been practicing at Yellow Corktree Mountain. The master then asked, "What did Master Huangbo teach you?"

Yixuan said, "Three times I asked about the essence of the way of awakening, and three times I got hit. I don't know what my mistake was."

Master Gao'an said, "That old man has such grandmotherly kindness! He exhausted himself teaching you, and yet you just talk about your own mistakes."

On hearing this Yixuan had a deep awakening. He exclaimed, "Huangbo's way of awakening is not so special after all!"

The master grabbed him and said, “You arrogant little novice! You just came to me saying you didn't understand your mistake, and now you say Master Huangbo's teaching is not so special. What have you seen? Say something!”

Yixuan then struck the master. The master released him and said, “Your teacher is Huangbo. It's not my business.”

Yixuan then returned to Yellow Corktree Mountain. When Master Huangbo saw him he said, “You're always coming and going. How will it ever stop?”

Yixuan said, “Only through grandmotherly kindness.” Then he made a deep bow.

When the master asked where he had been, Yixuan told him the story of his encounter with Master Gao'an. The master said, “That old man talks too much. Next time I see him I'll give him a whack myself.”

Yixuan said, “Why wait till later? Here's one now!” Then he struck the master.

The master exclaimed, “You crazy monk! Coming here and grabbing the tiger's whiskers!”

Then Yixuan shouted.

The master called his attendant and said, “Take this crazy monk to the practice hall.”

Yixuan remained with Master Huangbo for several years. His favorite work project was planting pines and cedars all around the monastery where trees had been cut for lumber and firewood. When the master asked his purpose in planting trees, Yixuan said, “To keep the mountain-gate beautiful, and as a guidepost for later generations.”

At some point Yixuan traveled to Hunan to meet and learn from Master Guishan Lingyu and Master Deshan Xuanjian. Eventually he returned to the northern region of China from where he had come. He finally settled in the Zhenzhou region of Hebei Province in a small cloister called Riverford Overlook Temple (Linji Yuan).

In the neighborhood of this temple there lived a homeless elder monk named Puhua. Although living as an eccentric vagabond, Puhua had once been a student of Master Panshan Baoji, a prominent disciple of Master Ma. Amongst the locals he was known for walking around town ringing a bell and chanting verses. Once when Yixuan ran into him he was chanting:

When brightness arrives, strike the brightness!

When darkness arrives, strike the darkness!

To all eight directions give a swirling blow!

Even when the empty sky arrives, throw it off!

Yixuan asked him, "What if none of these arrives?"

Puhua said, "Tomorrow there will be a meal offering at Great Compassion Temple."

At the meal offering the next day Yixuan said to Puhua, "A strand of hair swallows the ocean. A poppy seed contains Mount Sumeru. Is it miraculous or just an everyday matter?"

Puhua knocked over the table of food.

Yixuan said, "Crude."

Puhua said, "How can you speak in terms of crude and fine?"

Yixuan said nothing.

The next day they both went to a lay supporter's house for another meal offering. Yixuan asked Puhua, "How does today's meal compare with yesterday's?"

Puhua again knocked over the table.

Yixuan again said, "Crude."

Puhua said, "Blind man, where is crude or fine in the way of awakening?"

Yixuan and Puhua became friends. Puhua served as an informal mentor to the younger teacher and helped in the establishment of Riverford Overlook Temple as a small training community. A disciple of Puhua was said to have taken up the bamboo flute as a meditative

practice, and started an order of wandering, mendicant, flute-playing monks whose lineage continued into Japan.

Riverford Overlook (Linji) Temple was very near the pilgrimage route to the famous Wutai Mountain, revered as the home of Manjushri Bodhisattva. Yixuan, now Master Linji, once gave a talk to the public saying, “Some practitioners go to Wutai Mountain to seek out Manjushri. This is already a big mistake! Manjushri doesn't live on Wutai Mountain. Do you want to find Manjushri? It's just what's in front of your eyes! From first to last, there's nothing else. Don't doubt it anywhere you go!”

One time Master Linji Yixuan addressed the community saying, “This mountain monk will tell you something clearly: within the five-part body-mind of everyone there is a true person of no rank who is always present, not even a hair's breadth away. Why don't you recognize this person?”

Then a monk came forward and asked, “What is this true person with no rank?”

The master struck him with his staff and said, “The true person with no rank – what a corrupted thing.”

Once the official Wang Jingchu, who had studied with Master Guishan Lingyu, came to visit Riverford Overlook Temple. Master Linji took Wang to see the monk's practice hall. Wang asked, “Do the monks here study scriptures?”

Linji said, “No, they don't study scriptures.”

Wang asked, “Do they study Zen?”

Linji said, “No, they don't study Zen.”

Wang asked, “If they don't study scriptures and they don't study Zen, what do they do?”

Linji said, “They're all just becoming awakened ones and sages.”

Wang said, “Even precious gold dust, if it gets in your eyes, can blind. Don’t you think?”

Linji said, “And I always thought you were just a worldly person.”

Yangshan Huiji (807-883)

Master Yangshan Huiji was from Shaozhou in the south (in modern Guangdong Province). He became a novice at a young age, and while still a teenager he became determined to follow the Zen path, and so headed north to visit the renowned elder masters in Jiangxi and Hunan.

The first teacher that he studied with was the aging Master Danyuan Yingzhen, who had been the main disciple of the legendary Master Nanyang Huizhong. After leaving Danyuan, Huiji traveled to Mt. Gui in Hunan where he met Master Guishan Lingyou.

When Huiji first arrived at Guishan, the master asked him, “As a novice, do you have a master or not?”

Huiji said, “I have one.”

The master asked, “Who is it?”

Huiji walked from west to east, then stood still.

The master realized that Huiji was an unusual youth.

When Huiji was still a recent arrival at the monastery Master Guishan asked him, “I hear that you could give ten answers to one question when you were studying with Master Danyuan. Is that true?”

Huiji said, “Not at all.”

The master asked, “How do you say one phrase that goes beyond the teaching of Awakening?”

Just as Huiji was about to speak, Guishan shouted. The master asked the question two more times, and each time he shouted before Huiji could speak.

Finally, Huiji's eyes teared up, and he said, "My late master told me that when you meet a genuine person, you will be able to realize.

Today I have met a genuine person." Then Huiji decided to go up the mountain and focus on sitting in solitary retreat.

One day when Master Guishan was walking on the mountain, he saw Huiji doing sitting practice under a tree. The master tapped Huiji on the the back with his staff. Huiji turned his head, and Guishan asked, "Huiji, can you say it?"

Huiji replied, "Although I cannot say it, I will not depend upon someone else's mouth."

The master approved.

One day Master Guishan asked Huiji, "How do you understand inconceivable, clear, bright mind?"

Huiji said, "Mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars."

The master said, "You only understand things."

Huiji said, "Master, what did you ask me?"

The master said, "How do you understand inconceivable, clear bright mind?"

Huiji said, "Why do you call it things?"

The master approved.

One day in spring Huiji joined Master Guishan in clearing the ground for a rice field.

Huiji said, "This place is really low. That place is higher."

Guishan said, "Water can make things level, just level it with water."

Huiji replied, "Water isn't necessary, teacher. High places are simply high level; low places are low level."

The master agreed.

Once when Huiji came back from working on the rice field, Master Guishan asked, "Is the rice ready to be harvested?"

Huiji replied, "It's ready."

The master asked, "Do the rice plants appear to you to be green, yellow, or neither green nor yellow?"

Huiji said, "Master, what's behind your back?"

The master said, "Do you see it?"

Huiji raised up a bundle of rice plants and said, "Aren't you asking about this?"

The master approved.

One day Guishan said to Huiji, "All the beings of the great earth have only vast karmic consciousness, without a foundation to rely on. How can you show if this is true or not?"

Huiji said, "I have a way to show this."

Then, as a monk passed by, Huiji called out to him, "Venerable!"

The monk turned his head.

Huiji said, "Master, this is vast karmic consciousness, without a foundation to rely on."

Guishan approved.

Once Master Guishan was sitting silently with Huiji beside him as attendant. When he finished, the master said, "Huiji, you have recently been recognized as a successor in our tradition. How did that happen?"

Many monks are wondering about this. How do you understand it?"

Huiji said, "When I'm sleepy I close my eyes and rest. When I'm feeling fine I sit upright. I haven't ever said a thing."

The master said, "To achieve this understanding is no easy matter."

Huiji said, "In my understanding even attaching to this phrase is a mistake."

The master asked, "Are you the only one who doesn't speak about it?"

Huiji said, "From ancient times until now, all the sages were just like this."

The master replied, “There are some who would laugh at that answer.”

Huiji said, “The ones who would laugh are my colleagues.”

The master then asked, “How do you understand succession?”

Huiji got up and walked a circle around the master.

The master said, “The succession passed uninterruptedly from ancient times until now has just been broken.”

Huiji had a close bond with Master Guishan, and became his most prominent disciple. But during his training with his main teacher, even while still quite young, he often made excursions to check out other teachers.

Once Huiji visited Master Dongsì Ruhui, an aging disciple of Master Ma.

After Mazu’s passing, many students parroted his phrase, “This very mind itself is Buddha.” Master Dongsì criticized this, saying, “Where is this dwelling of Buddha that is called ‘this very mind’? Mind is the painter of the world, why call it ‘Buddha’? Mind is not ‘Buddha’, ‘Wisdom’ is not the way. The sword is long gone (sunk into the water) yet you all cut notches into the boat (to remember where it was lost).”

When Huiji arrived Master Dongsì asked, “Where do you come from?”

Huiji replied, “I’m from Guangzhou.”

Dongsì said, “I’ve heard in Guangzhou they have a bright jewel that can pacify the ocean. Is that true?”

Huiji said, “Yes, it’s true.”

Dongsì asked, “How would you describe it?”

Huiji said, “In the white moon (waxing) it is hidden. In the black moon (waning) it appears.”

Dongsi asked, “Have you brought it here?”

Huiji said, “I brought it.”

Dongsi said, “Why don’t you show it to me?”

Huiji said, “Recently I visited Master Guishan and was asked for this jewel. I directly saw that there is no word with which to respond, and no truth that can be reported.”

Dongsi said, “A true lion’s child has a great lion’s roar.”

Dogen said:

“What is this jewel?” Then he drew a circle with his whisk and said, “Isn’t this it?”

Once when Huiji was back at Mt. Gui, Master Guishan gave a talk in which he said, “Sentient beings have no 'Awakened Nature'.” Two monks from the community of Master Yanguan Qi’an were skeptical.

Huiji met them in the garden and they said to him, “Brother, it’s not easy; you should study the teaching of awakening diligently.”

Huiji drew a circle in the air, showed it to them, then threw it behind him. Then he reached out his arms and asked them to return the circle.

The two monks were speechless and didn’t know what to do.

Huiji said, “It’s not easy; you should study the teaching of awakening diligently.” Then he bowed and left.

Both monks eventually decided to stay on at Mt. Gui.

After Huiji had finished his training with Master Guishan and had spent some time traveling, he began to teach at a monastery called Dongping (Eastern Peace). An elder disciple of Guishan’s named Mihu (who, with a name that means 'Foreigner Mi', and with his full beard, was likely from Central Asia), was teaching in the capital. He sent a monk to check out Huiji with the question, “These days, is there still authentic awakening or not?”

Huiji responded saying, “It’s not that there’s no awakening, but how can we deal with falling into the secondary?”

The monk returned and reported this to Master MiHu, who deeply approved.

Early in his career at Dongping, Huiji received a letter and a mirror from Master Guishan. During a talk he held up the mirror and said, “Master Guishan has sent a mirror. Tell me, is this Guishan’s mirror or Dongping’s mirror? If you say it’s Dongping’s, I say Guishan sent it. If you say it’s Guishan’s mirror, I say it’s in Dongping’s hand. If you can say a word, I’ll keep it. If you can’t, I’ll destroy it.”

Huiji asked two more times, but no one in the assembly responded. So Huiji struck the mirror.

One day a monk asked Huiji, “What’s the difference between heaven and hell?” Huiji drew a line in the ground.

Eventually Huiji moved his community to Mt Yang in the Yuanzhou region of Jiangxi Province. Here his reputation spread and attracted students from all over China.

Once Master Yangshan Huiji ascended the hall and addressed the assembly saying, “All of you, turn the light on yourself. Don’t try to remember what I’m saying. From beginningless time you have turned your attention away and remained in darkness. The roots of delusion are deep - difficult to uproot. So the Awakened One established expedient means to grab your attention - these are like showing yellow leaves to a crying child, who believes they’re gold and stops crying. Do you believe Master Shitou had a real gold shop? In my shop I have a whole range of goods. If you come looking for mouse turds, I’ll give you some; If someone comes looking for real gold then I’ll give that.”

A monk came forward and said, “I don’t want more mouse turds. May I have the master’s real gold?”

Yangshan said, “If you try to bite down on the head of a flying arrow, you can try till the year of the ass, but you won’t succeed.”

The monk said nothing.

Yangshan said, “If you want to exchange something we can make a deal. If you don’t want to exchange anything then we can’t.”

Once a monk asked Master Yangshan, “Does our 'Truth-body' understand a true discourse?”

Yangshan said, “I can’t speak about it, but someone else can?”

The monk asked, “Who is the person who can?”

Yangshan pushed forward a cushion.

One day a monk came to practice under Master Yangshan. He asked, “Does the master recognize written characters?”

The master said, “I recognize some.”

The monk then drew a circle in the air and presented it to Yangshan.

The master used his sleeve to erase the circle.

The monk drew another circle and presented it.

The master received it with both hands then threw it behind him.

The monk stared at the master. The master looked down.

The monk then walked in a circle around the master’s seat.

The master then hit the monk with his staff.

The monk went out.

Just as Master Guishan had taken an interest in teaching women, and had at least one woman disciple who became a master (Liu Tenmo), Yangshan also supported the training of women. He took the unusual step of appointing a nun named Miaoxin to be guest manager, an important office in a large training monastery. In this role she was once taking care of the housing of a large party of seventeen visiting monks, when she overheard them discussing the story of Master Huineng and the flag. She was able to bring insight to all of them at once by her famous utterance, “It’s not the flag, nor the wind, nor the mind that is

moving.”

Master Yangshan, like most teachers, also taught laypeople. The officer Lu, who had visited Master Guishan, came to Yangshan after having some insight on reading a scripture.

Master Yangshan asked officer Lu, “I hear that you’ve achieved awakening by reading a scripture. Is this true?”

Lu said, “Yes, master. When reading the Nirvana Sutra, it was the line, ‘Without cutting off desire, enter nirvana.’”

The master held up his whisk and said, “How can this enter nirvana?”

Lu said, “There is no need for even the word ‘enter’”

The master said, “‘Entering’ is not for you.”

Lu stood up and left.

Lingyun Zhiqin (no dates)

Master Lingyun Zhiqin was from Benzhou (on the coast of modern Fujian Province). After becoming inspired to practice the Way he traveled to Hunan and became a student of Master Guishan Lingyu.

One spring as he was walking through a mountain valley near Mt. Gui, he came upon a peach tree in full bloom and suddenly the great matter became completely clear. When he returned to the monastery, he composed a verse to present to Master Guishan:

For thirty years seeking a swordsman:
Many times the leaves have fallen and branches sprouted
anew.
One glimpse of peach blossoms,
and in this presence, all doubts are gone.

Presenting his understanding to Guishan, the master gave his approval and said, “Those who enter the Way through naturally ripened

causes never regress. Protect and maintain it well.”

Xuansha said:

This truly hits the mark. But I dare say the elder brother has not yet achieved maintaining it.

After leaving Mt. Gui, Zhiqin settled on Inspiring Cloud (Lingyun) Mountain in Fuzhou (Fujian Province) and began to teach. Once, when ascending the hall to address the community, he said, “Among you all there are people with various strengths and weaknesses, but you should all observe the life of the four seasons, the leaves falling and the flowers blooming, which has gone on for an incalculable eon. All living things, all the realms of being, even the elements - earth, water, fire, and wind, all of these things come to completion and pass away in the cycle of existence. But even if all of cause and effect is exhausted and the various realms are finished, still throughout the universe not a single hair will have been created or taken away. There remains this one fundamental awareness beyond time.

Wherever those of clear practice dwell with good companions of the Way, and make this truth manifest through renunciation, that place is where true teaching is revealed. Those who remain confused, obstructed from the illumination of awakening, continue to be submerged in the three realms, transmigrating from birth to death.

A monk asked, “How can we escape from birth, old age, sickness, and death?”

Master Lingyun Zhiqin said, “The green mountain is fundamentally unmoving, but the floating clouds pass back and forth.”

The monk Huiling once asked Lingyun, “What is the essential meaning of the way of Awakening?”

Lingyun said, “Before the affairs of the donkey have left, the affair of the horse has arrived.”

Xiangyan Zhixian (d.898)

Master Xiangyan Zhixian came from Qingzhou in the northern province of Shandong. With a brilliant intellect, he became a keen scholar as a monk, with a vast amount of scriptural knowledge. Raising an aspiration to study Zen, he first practiced with Master Baizhang Huaihai toward the end of that master's life, but was unable to clarify the essential matter. When Master Baizhang passed, Zhixian travelled to Mt. Gui to study under Master Guishan Lingyou.

One day, after Zhixian had lived at Mt. Gui for a number of years, Master Guishan said to him, "Everything you say is what you have memorized from scriptures or commentaries. Other than what you remember from texts, or even from the talks of this old monk, I want to hear a single statement. When you were a baby you didn't discriminate east from west, or north from south. Right now, from this mind before discrimination, say something, and I will check it."

Zhixian was unable to answer. After hesitating for awhile, he mumbled a few words to explain his understanding, but the master wouldn't accept it. He returned to the monk's hall and looked through the books he had collected, but he couldn't find a phrase that would satisfy the master.

Finally Zhixian said to Master Guishan, "I am unable to respond. Would the master please speak and reveal it to me?"

The master said, "What I would say is my own - how could it benefit you? If I answered I'm afraid I'd destroy your own path and later you would scold me."

Zhixian continued to be unable to clarify the matter, and he grew greatly upset. In tears he said, "In this lifetime I'm not going to understand Zen. I should just give up and become a common monk serving food to other monks." Then he gathered his books and burned them, saying, "A painting of a rice cake does not satisfy hunger!"

Then Zhixian left Mt. Gui and wandered. Eventually he ended up in Nanyang (Hunan) where he built a hut on the site where Master Nanyang Huizhong used to have a hermitage. There he lived a quiet, solitary life.

One day while he was sweeping the path in front of his hut, Zhixian swept up a pebble which flew through the air and hit a stalk of bamboo. At the sound of its striking, Zhixian dropped everything and the great matter was suddenly perfectly clear.

Soon after Zhixian wrote a poem:

One strike and subject and object vanish; all knowledge dissolves.
No more practice based on self-centered pretense-
Now all my actions simply celebrate the ancient path
without falling into passivity or doubt.

Later Zhixian settled down to teach at Scented Cliff (Xiangyan) Monastery in Dengzhou, toward the north in Henan Province. In his early years as abbot, a monk once came to visit from Mt. Gui. Master Xiangyan Zhixian asked him, "What does the teacher have to say these days?"

The monk said, "Someone asked about the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from India, and the master just raised his whisk."

Xiangyan asked, "How did the brothers there understand this?"

The monk said, "The brothers discussed this and thought it was a case of 'within forms, clarifying the mind; adhering to things, demonstrating the principle.'"

Xiangyan said, "If you know, you just know. Why do those who don't know stress themselves to death with rushing about?"

Then the monk asked, "What was Master Guishan's meaning?"

Xiangyan raised his whisk.

Dogen said:

Old man Xiangyan was exactly right. And yet I don't practice with Xiangyan, and I don't walk together with Guishan. Suppose someone asked me, "What was Guishan's meaning?"

After a pause Dogen raised his whisk, then descended from his seat.

One day a monk asked the master, “What is Xiangyan’s exalted state?”

The master said, “Wildflowers and forest trees don’t need fertilizer.”

Master Xiangyan once said in a talk, “It’s like someone hanging by their teeth to the branch of a tree that leans over a thousand- foot- high cliff. His hands have nothing they can reach, and his feet have no foothold. Just at that time someone comes up and asks the significance of Bodhidharma’s coming from India. If you open your mouth you will lose your life; if you don’t answer you abandon the questioner and your bodhisattva duty to free all beings. At this very time, what can you do?”

Senior monk Zhao came forward and said, “Leaving aside the matter of hanging from the tree, tell me, what about before climbing into the tree?”

Xiangyan broke into laughter.

One day a monk asked Xiangyan, “What is the Way?”

Xiangyan said, “A dragon howling in a withered tree.”

Liu Tiemo (no dates)

Master Liu Tiemo (Liu, the “Iron Millstone”) is one of the very few woman masters mentioned in the classical records. Very little is recorded about her life, but she was said to have been born to a peasant family who worked as tenant farmers. Her humble background is also a rarity amongst the descriptions of masters in historical writings, as most of them came from wealthy and educated classes.

As her family was often without enough food, Liu, as with the children of many poor families, sought relief for herself and her family by going to live at a nunnery as a novice. After growing up in a series of women's monasteries, Liu became inspired to discover the truth of awakening, and set out to find a clear teacher. When she met Master

Guishan Lingyu, she decided to study with him, and soon became a prominent disciple. After her training (and perhaps during, as well) she lived in a hermitage on Mt. Gui, nearby the master's monastery.

One day Liu came to visit her teacher Master Guishan. When the master saw her he said, “Ah, old buffalo, you've come.”

Liu said, “Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast on Mount Wutai.” (in the far north of China) “Will you be going, master?”

The master simply laid down on the floor and completely relaxed. Liu immediately left.

Once Master Liu met with Priest Zihu, a disciple of Master Nanquan Puyuan. Zihu asked, “I hear you're called the “Iron Millstone” (Tiemou) as you're tough to handle.”

Liu said, “I wouldn't say that.”

Zihu said, “It's conveyed on the left and on the right.”

Liu said, “Venerable, be careful not to fall down,” and she turned to leave. Zihu struck her with his staff, but she just left.

Dasui Fazhen (834-919)

Master Dasui Fazhen came from Zizhou in the western province of Sichuan. He had a deep awakening while still a young novice, and after full ordination he traveled to meet many teachers to refine his understanding. After practicing with Masters Daowu Yuanzhi, Yunyan Tansheng, and Dongshan Liangjie, the last teacher he visited was Master Changqing Da'an who, at that time, was the abbot of Mt. Gui.

Master Da'an once asked Fazhen, “You've been practicing here for some time now. Why haven't you asked any questions?”

Fazhen said, “What would you have me ask?”

Da'an said, “Why don't you ask, ‘What is Awakening?’”

Fazhen immediately covered Da'an's mouth with his hand.
Da'an approved.

Eventually Fazhen returned west to Sichuan where he first lived at Dragon Cherishing Monastery on Shankou Mountain. Later he dwelt for more than ten years in a giant hollow tree on the grounds of an old temple on Great Compliance (Dasui) Mountain. It is said that he set up a tea stall by the road and for years served tea to passersby.

One day a monk asked Master Dasui Fazhen, "What is the essential teaching of all the Awakened Ones?"

Dasui held up his whisk and then said, "Do you understand?"

The monk said, "No."

Dasui said, "It's a whisk."

Once a monk was preparing for travel. Master Dasui asked, "Where are you going?"

The monk said, "I'm going to live alone on West Mountain."

The master asked, "If I call out to the top of East Mountain for you, will you come or not?"

The monk said, "Of course not."

The master said, "You haven't yet realized the meaning of 'living alone.'"

One day a monk asked Master Dasui, "In the boundless fire at the end of the eon, the great thousands of worlds will all be destroyed. Will *this* also be destroyed?"

The master said, "Destroyed."

The monk said, "Then *this* follows along with everything else?"

The master said, "*This* follows along with everything else."

One day a monk asked Master Longji, "In the fire at the end of the eon, the whole universe

will be destroyed. Will *this* also be destroyed?”

Longji said, “Not destroyed.”

The monk said, “Why is it not destroyed?”

Longji said, “It’s the same as the universe.”

Moshan Liaoran

Little is recorded about the life of Master Moshan Liaoran, but she is one of the few examples of a fully recognized female master in the records. She was a prominent disciple of Master Gao’an Dayu, who was a friend and neighbor of Master Huangbo Xiyun, and a disciple of Master Guizong Zhichen

After training with master Gao’an, Liaoran settled on nearby Summit Mountain (Moshan) and began to teach at a monastery that included both men and women practitioners.

One day the monk Zhixian, who had studied with Linji, came to visit Summit Mountain. Master Moshan sent her attendant to ask him, “Venerable, are you here sightseeing, or have you come for the teaching of Awakening?”

Zhixian said, “For the teaching.” He was then invited for an interview with the master.

Master Moshan asked him, “Venerable, where have you just come from?”

Zhixian replied, “From the entrance at the mouth of the road.”

Moshan said, “Why didn’t you close it off?”

Zhixian had no response. Then he made respectful prostrations.

After that, Zhixian asked, “What can you say about Summit Mountain (Moshan)?”

Moshan said, “The peak isn’t revealed.”

Zhixian said, “Who is the master of this mountain?”

Moshan said, “Without the form of man or woman.”

Zhixian asked, “So can you transform into other forms?”

Moshan said, “We're not heavenly spirits or hungry ghosts. Why should we want to be something else?”

Zhixian then asked to become a student of the master. He stayed at Moshan's monastery for three years as head gardener.

Later, when Zhixian became a teacher at Guanxi in Changsha, he said, “I got half a ladle-full from Papa Linji and half a ladle-full from Mama Moshan. Together it made a full ladle's worth which I drank completely. Ever since then, I've never been thirsty.”

Jinhua Juzhi

Master Jinhua Juzhi lived and taught in Wuzho, south of Hangzhou in the eastern province of Zhejiang. At first he was a scholar monk spending his time studying scriptures in a small temple-hermitage. One afternoon a traveling nun named Shiji (“Reality”) suddenly arrived at his door. She walked around Juzhi in respectful greeting but didn't take off her traveling hat. After circling, she pounded her staff and said, “If you can speak, I'll remove my hat.”

Juzhi didn't know what to say. Shiji repeated the circling two more times, each time pounding her staff and asking for a response, but Juzhi didn't reply.

Then, as Shiji began to leave, Juzhi said, “It's getting late; why don't you stay here for the night?”

Shiji said, “Say the right word and I'll stay.”

Juzhi had no response. So Shiji left.

Juzhi became distraught and said to himself, “Although I inhabit the form of a man, I don't have the spirit of a man. I had better leave this place and go traveling in search of a good teacher.”

A few days later, before Juzhi had finished preparations for traveling, a wandering master named Hangzhou Tianlong happened to come by the temple. Master Tianlong was the most prominent disciple of the great hermit master Damei Fachang, himself a student of Master Ma.

A monk once asked Master Tianlong, “How can one escape the three realms of conventional reality?”

The master said, “Where are you right this moment?”

Juzhi politely received Master Tainlong into his temple. He then proceeded to tell the master about his failed encounter with the nun Shiji, and asked for teaching. Master Tainlong simply held up one finger. Suddenly Juzhi had a deep awakening.

After that time students began to gather at Juzhi’s temple. He became famous for frequently replying to any kind of question by simply raising a finger.

When he was about to pass away, he said to his community, “I inherited Tainlong’s one-finger Zen, and in my entire lifetime I have still not exhausted it. Do you want to understand it?” He then held up a finger and passed away.

Dogen said:

After meeting Hangzhou Tianlong, Juzhi expounded the teaching extensively for human and heavenly beings, explaining horizontally and vertically without hesitation or obstruction throughout his life simply by holding up one finger. Thus if someone asked about the Awakened One, he spoke of the Awakened One; if someone asked about the Way, he spoke of the Way... The seven primordial buddhas expounded teaching and saved beings through Juzhi’s gesture, and the twenty-eight ancestral sages in India expounded teaching and saved beings through Juzhi’s gesture.

Would you all like to meet old Juzhi? (Dogen raised his whisk and said) Look!

Do you want to hear old man Juzhi expounding the teaching? (Dogen hit his sitting platform with his whisk and said) Listen!

Now you have met with Juzhi, and heard him expounding the teaching. However, do not open your mouth and talk with a lengthy tongue about his finger.

Yunju Daoying (d.902)

Master Yunju Daoying grew up in Youzhou, in the north near Beijing.. He received ordination at age twenty five in his home region, and engaged in the usual course of studying monastic discipline. Soon,

however, Daoying turned his attention to Zen, and he first traveled west to Shanxi Province to study with Master Cuiwei Wuxue.

Eventually Daoying heard of the reputation of Master Dongshan Liangjie, and he made his way southeast to practice with him at Cave Mountain in Jiangxi..

When Daoying first arrived at the monastery, Master Dongshan asked him, “What’s your name?”

The young monk said, “Daoying.”

Dongshan said, “Say something beyond that.”

Daoying said, “Going beyond, ‘I’m not named Daoying.’”

Dongsahn approved, saying, “Just like when I answered Master Daowu.”

One day Master Dongshan asked Daoying, “Where have you been?”

Daoying said, “Walking in the mountains.”

The master asked, “Did you find a mountain that’s suitable for residing on?”

Daoying said, “None are suitable for residing on.”

The master said, “So you’ve checked out all the mountains in the country?”

Daoying said, “No, it's not like that.”

The master said, “Then you must have found an entry path.”

Daoying said, “There’s no such path.”

The master said, “If there’s no path, I wonder how you’ve come before this old monk.”

Daoying said, “If there *was* a path then a mountain would stand between us.”

The master said, “From here on, even ten thousand people won’t be able to grasp this student.”

Once Master Dongshan told a story to Daoying: “Master Nanquan once questioned a priest who lectured on the Maitreya Sutra, asking, ‘When will Maitreya (the future Buddha) descend?’”

The priest replied, 'He is presently in the heavenly palace, and will be born on earth sometime in the future.' Nanquan said, 'There is no Maitreya up in heaven, and no Maitreya down on earth.'"

After hearing this story, Daoying said, "If there's simply no Maitreya in heaven and no Maitreya on earth, I wonder where his name came from."

Dongshan said, "Ah, Master Ying!"

Soon Daoying built a hut for solitary retreat on nearby Three Peaks Mountain. For ten days he didn't come down to the monastery. When he finally showed up, Master Dongshan asked him, "Why haven't you come to meals lately?"

Daoying said, "The heavens take care of all I need."

The master said, "Are you still like that? You'd better come see me tonight."

That evening when Daoying came for an interview, Master Dongshan called out "Hermit Ying!"

Daoying said, "Yes?"

The master said, "Not thinking of good, not thinking of evil, what is this?"

Daoying returned to his hermitage with reawakened clarity, and from then on came to the monastery for food at regular times.

One day at a talk before the community, Master Dongshan said, "Who is the person who, even among ten thousand people, does not face a single person, and also does not turn his back on a single person?"

Daoying walked out of the hall saying, "This person is going to the monk's hall to practice."

Master Dongshan once joined Daoying in the kitchen and asked, "What are you doing?"

Daoying said, “Making miso.”

“How much salt do you use?” asked the master.

“I add a little from time to time,” said Daoying.

“How is the taste?” asked the master.

“Done,” said Daoying.

One day when the monk Yicun was staying on Cave Mountain, Daoying asked him, “Has the snow outside the gate melted or not?”

Yicun said, “Not a single flake exists, what is there to melt?”

Daoying said, “Melted.”

After Daoying left Cave Mountain he spent some time traveling, and then settled on Cloud Dwelling (Yunju) Mountain northwest of Nanchang City in Jiangxi Province. Here he began teaching at True Suchness (Zhenru) Monastery, and soon attracted a large community of hundreds of monks. Today this monastery is still a flourishing center for Zen training, one of the most prominent in China.

Once a monk asked Master Yunju Daoying, “What is the one Dharma (truth)?”

Yunju said, “What are the ten thousand dharmas (phenomena)?”

The monk said, “I don’t understand this.”

Yunju said, “The one Dharma is your own mind. The ten thousand dharmas are your fundamental nature. Are they one thing or two?”

The monk bowed.

Yunju shared this poem with him:

The single truth is the essence of all phenomena.

The myriad phenomena make up the one truth.

“Mind-only” and “nature only”-

Don’t say they’re different or the same.

One day a monk asked Master Yunju, “When we are born, where is the awareness of our existence?”

The master said, “Existence is not the same as being born.”

The monk asked, “So how about the time before you were born?”

The master said, “You never die.”

The monk asked, “Before you are born, where are you?”

The master said, “Such a place cannot be contained.”

Once Master Yunju said, “If you want to attain the matter of suchness, you should just be a person of suchness. Already being a person of suchness, why worry about such a matter?”

One day a monk asked Master Yunju, “Ultimately, what is a monk?”

The master said, “Abiding well in the mountains.”

The monk bowed.

The master asked, “What is your understanding?”

The monk said, “Within the realms of good and bad, life and death, fortune or adversity, a monk’s mind ultimately is immovable like a mountain.”

The master hit the monk with his staff and said, “You have betrayed the former sages and destroyed my descendants.”

Then the master asked the monk standing next to the first monk, “How do you understand this?”

The monk said, “A monk ultimately abides in the mountains, his eyes not seeing colors black or yellow (of heaven and earth), his ears not hearing music of bamboo and strings.”

The master said, “You, too, have betrayed the former sages and destroyed my descendants.”

Once someone brought up Master Dongshan’s teaching that, “you should expound what you are not able to practice, and practice what you are not able to expound,” and then asked for Master Yunju’s comment.

Yunju said, “When practicing there is no way to expound. When expounding there is no way to practice. Neither practicing nor expounding, which path should you tread.?”

Master Yunju was once asked by a government official, “It is said that the World-Honored One had intimate speech, and that Mahakasyapa did not hide it. What is the World-Honored One’s intimate speech?”

The master said, “Officer.”

The officer said, “Yes.”

The master said, “Do you understand?”

The officer said, “No, I don’t.”

The master said, “When you don’t understand it, that is the World-Honored One’s intimate speech. When you do understand, then that is Mahakasyapa’s not hiding it.”

Longya Judun (835-923)

Master Longya Judun grew up in Fuzhou in Jiangxi Province. At the age of fourteen he left home to become a novice at a temple in Jizhou. After full ordination on Mt. Song, Judun began to travel in order to meet and practice with a variety of Zen Masters.

First Judun traveled to Shanxi Province in the northwest to study with Master Cuiwei Wuxue. One day he said to the master, “Your student has been here for over a month, but although the master ascends the hall to speak each day, we have not received even one teaching about the Way of Awakening.”

Master Cuiwei said, “So what?”

Next Judun traveled southeast to Hunan and studied with Deshan Xuanjian. He said to Master Deshan, “From afar I’ve heard of Deshan’s ‘one phrase’ teaching, but up until now I haven’t heard the

master say one phrase about the teaching.”

Master Deshan said, “So what?”

Soon after Judun went to study with Master Dongshan Liangjie.

Again he asked the same question.

Master Dongshan said, “Are you accusing me of something?”

Judun then began relating what his previous teachers had said, and then suddenly realized the meaning of all the responses he had received. He decided to stay on and practice with Master Dongshan, and eventually became one of the master's prominent disciples.

One day Judun asked Master Dongshan another question he had always asked his previous teachers: “What is the significance of Bodhidharma’s coming from India?”

The Master said, “Wait until Dong Creek flows backward; then I’ll tell you.”

Judun suddenly had a deep realization and all his doubts were cleared.

After training with Master Dongshan, Judun traveled some more to refine his understanding, and then eventually took up the abbacy of Miaoji Temple on Dragon Fang (Longya) Mountain near Changsha City, Hunan.

Once Master Longya Judun offered a verse to his community:

Study the Way like boring wood to make a fire.
When smoke arises, don’t stop.
Just wait until the golden star appears.
Returning home is arriving at your destination.

Dogen said:

Study the Way like boring wood to make a fire.
Seeing the smoke you shouldn’t stop

Immediately the golden star appears.
For all the world this is the central destination

One day Master Longya told his community about how he had asked his previous teachers to explain the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from India. Master Cuiwei had responded by asking Longya to pass him a meditation chin rest, and when he did, the master hit him with it. Longya had said, "It's alright if you hit me. But the point is that there's no meaning of Bodhidharma's coming to India." When Longya went to visit Master Linji, he asked the same question, and Linji asked for a sitting mat. When Longya passed it, the master hit him with it as well.

A monk asked Master Longya, "When you were with those venerable masters, did you understand them?"

Longya said, "I understood them. But there's still the point that there's no meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from India."

Another time a monk asked Master Longya, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from India?"

The master said, "I will tell you when the stone tortoise speaks."

After a pause the monk said, "The stone tortoise has spoken!"

The master asked, "What did it say to you?"

The monk was silent.

The later Master Dogen quotes Master Longya as saying, "You who study the Way should first study being in poverty. Only when you study poverty, and actually are in poverty, does the Way become intimate."

One day a monk asked Master Longya, "When do the teachers of old get stuck?"

Longya said, "When the thief slips into an empty room."

Caoshan Benji (840-901)

Master Caoshan Benji came from Quanzhou on the southeastern coast in the province of Fujian. Leaving home at the age of nineteen, he became a novice at Lingshi Monastery in Fuzhou, just to the north.

Ordained at twenty-five, he soon went to Cave Mountain to study Zen with Master Dongshan Liangjie, and became a prominent disciple of the master.

After several years of training, Benji prepared to leave Cave Mountain, and went to bid farewell to the master. Master Dongshan asked, “Where are you going?”

Benji said, “I’m going to the place of no changing.”

The master said, “Can you leave from the place of no changing?”

Benji said, “Leaving is no change.”

Eventually Benji traveled back to Fuzhou and started a training center on Mt. Heyu which he renamed Cao Mountain (Caoshan), after Master Huineng’s teaching place of Cao Creek (Caoxi). After writing a commentary to the poems of the famous hermit Han Shan, his reputation spread and many practitioners came to train at his community.

One day Master Caoshan Benji said to senior monk De, “The Awakened One’s truth-body is like the vast empty sky. It manifests forms like the moon appearing on the water. How can you express this?”

De said, “It’s like a donkey looking in a well.”

Caoshan said, “That’s pretty good, but still only eighty percent.”

De asked, “How would you say it, master?”

Caoshan said, “It’s like the well looking at the donkey.”

Once the monk Wenyan (later of Yunmen) came to visit Master Caoshan. He said, “The unchanging person has come. Will the master receive him or not?”

Caoshan said, “Here on Mt. Cao there’s no spare time for that.”

Later Wenyan asked Caoshan, “Why aren’t we aware of the place of great intimacy?”

Caoshan said, “Just because it is so intimate, we don’t know it’s there.”

One day a monk asked Master Caoshan, “A child returns to its parent, but the parent doesn’t pay attention to the child. Why?”

The master said, “It’s quite natural just like that.”

The monk asked, “Then what is the love between parent and child?”

The master said, “It cannot be split apart, even when hit with an ax.”

A monk once asked Master Caoshan, “It’s said in the Flower Garland Sutra that the great ocean does not harbor a corpse. What is the great ocean?”

The master said, “It contains all the myriad things.”

The monk asked, “Then why doesn’t it contain a corpse?”

The master said, “Those who have stopped breathing cannot stay.”

The monk said, “If the ocean contains all the myriad things, then why can’t those who have stopped breathing stay?”

The master said, “All the myriad things do not stop breathing.”

Qinglin Shiqian

The details of Master Qinglin Shiqian's early life are not recorded, but he became a prominent disciple of master Dongshan Liangjie. Once when he was planting pines on Cave Mountain, an old man asked him for a poem. Shiqian composed and recited this verse.

More than three feet long,
the thick green grass.
I don’t know what generation

will see this pine's old age

After training with Master Dongshan, Shiqian went to live by himself in a hermitage for ten years. He later traveled to Suizhou where he became abbot of Green Forest (Qinglin) Monastery and began to establish a reputation as a teacher. Eventually, after the passing of Master Dongshan, he moved back to Cave Mountain and succeeded his master as the new abbot of that monastery.

One day Master Qinglin Shiqian ascended the hall and said to the community, "The essential teaching of the ancestors is proceeding right now. The truth is apparent. What other matter is there?"

Once a monk asked Master Qinglin, "What is the Way?"

Qinglin said, "Turn your head and look at that distant mountain ravine."

One day a monk asked Master Qinglin, "The gradual path twists and turns. What about sudden enlightenment?"

The master said, "You face away from the black jewel beneath your feet and instead look toward a sky filled to the moon with anxiety."

Another time a monk asked Master Qinglin, "Is there a shortcut way to proceed on the path?"

The master said, "There is a deadly snake in that road. I warn you, don't step on its head?"

The monk asked, "What happens if I step on it?"

The master said, "You will lose your life."

The monk asked, "What happens if I don't step on it?"

The master said, "There's no way to go around it or retreat."

The monk asked, "At such a time, what happens?"

The master said, "It's gone."

The monk asked, "Gone where?"

The master said, "The grass is deep. There's no place to look for it."

The monk said, “Master, you too should be careful.”

The master clapped his hands and said, “Here’s another poisonous one!”

Once a monk asked Master Qinglin, “The ‘Treasury of the Eye of Truth’ has been passed down from ancestor to ancestor. Is there anyone to whom the master can pass it on?”

The master said, “There is fertile ground for sprouts to grow. Great awakening has no teacher.”

Other Disciples of Dongshan

Master Xianqi of Heaven Child (Tiantong) Monastery (near modern Ningbo City, Zhejiang) was a disciple of Master Dongshan. Once a monk asked him, “I have come here for an understanding of the extraordinary teaching. Master, please give me precise instruction.”

Master Tiantong said, “By sitting here, all is done. What kind of extraordinary and precise thing should I talk about?”

The monk said, “Since you’ve answered this way, I think I’ll find some new sandals and go on traveling.”

The master said, “Come closer.”

The monk went closer.

The master said, “What’s wrong with my answer?”

The monk didn’t respond.

The master hit him.

Master Qianfeng of Yuezhou (in the north of modern Jiangxi) was another of Master Dongshan's many disciples. Once a monk asked him, “All the sages in the ten directions have a single path to the gate of nirvana. What is that path?”

Yuezhou drew a line with his staff and said, “Right here.”

Xuefeng Yicun (822-908)

Maser Xuefeng Yicun grew up in Nan'an City in the Quanzhou region (in southern Fujian Province, on the coast near Taiwan). At the age of twelve he became a novice at the local Jade Valley (Yujian) Monastery. During the Huichang era suppression of Buddhism, Yicun was forced to abandon monastic life, but as conditions improved, he resumed his studies, and began to travel widely seeking out various teachers. He received full ordination at Baocha Monastery in the far northern region of Youzhou (modern Beijing). He then turned his attention exclusively to the Zen tradition, and spent many years traveling between the various masters in the Zen heartland of Jiangxi and Hunan. First Yicun studied with the aging master Yanguan Qi'an, then visited Touzi Datong, and eventually traveled south to Cave Mountain, where he spent a considerable time with Master Dongshan Liangjie.

One day while Yicun was chopping wood, Master Dongshan came by and asked, "What are you doing?"

Yicun said, chopping out a log for a bucket."

The master said, "How many chops with the ax does it take to complete?"

Yicun said, "One chop will do it."

The master said, "That's still a matter of this side. What about the other side?"

Yicun said, "It's accomplished immediately without laying a hand on it."

The master said, "That's still a matter of this side. What about the other side?"

Yicun gave up.

Once, when Yicun was serving as rice cook at Cave Mountain, Master Dongshan came into the kitchen while Yicun was washing the rice and asked him, "Do you remove the dirt and stones from the rice,

or the rice from the dirt and stones?”

Yicun said, “I remove them both at once.”

The master said, “Then what will the monks eat?”

Yicun then overturned the rice-pot.

The master said, “Given your character, you might resonate with Master Deshan.”

When Yicun was ready to leave Cave Mountain, he went to say farewell to the master.

Master Dongshan asked him, “Where are you going?”

Yicun said, “I’m traveling through the mountains.”

The master said, “When you came here, what road did you take?”

Yicun said, “I came though Flying Monkey Peaks.”

The master said, “What road will you take now?”

Yicun said, “I’ll go through Flying Monkey Peaks as well.”

The master said, “There is someone who doesn’t go by way of Flying Monkey Peaks. Do you know this person?”

Yicun said, “I don’t know this person.”

The master said, “Why don’t you know this person?”

Yicun said, “Because this person has no face.”

The master said, “If you don’t know this person, how do you know this person doesn’t have a face?”

Yicun didn’t respond.

Eventually Yicun made his way to the community of Master Deshan Xuanjian in Wuling (near modern Changde City, Hunan). There he worked in the kitchen as he had on Cave Mountain, and he befriended the head monk Quanhua (later of Mt. Yantou, 828-887) who was from the same region of Quanzhou. Although younger than Yicun, Quanhua had already developed penetrating clarity in his practice, and his confidence made him an able mentor to Yicun.

One day when Yicun was cooking rice in the kitchen, the meal was running late. Stepping outside to hang a rice cloth to dry, he spotted Master Deshan coming to the meal with bowls in hand. Yicun said to the master, “The bell hasn’t been rung and the drum hasn’t been struck. Where are you going with your bowls?” The master simply turned around and went back to the abbot’s room.

When Yicun saw Quanhou he told him what had happened.

Quanhou said, “Old Master Deshan still doesn’t know the last word.”

The master heard about this and had Quanhou summoned to the abbot’s room. The master asked Quanhou, “Do you not approve of me?” Quanhou then explained his meaning and the master let it go.

The next day Master Deshan ascended the hall to give a talk.

Afterwards Quanhou exclaimed to the whole community, “Old Master Deshan knows the last word after all!”

After practicing for awhile together at Virtue Mountain with Master Deshan, Yicun and Quanhou decided to spend some time traveling. When staying overnight in a temple on Aoshan (Turtle Mountain) in Lizhou (Hunan), they were snowed in by a blizzard and had to remain there for several days. Quanhou used the time to catch up on sleep, while Yicun diligently sat in meditation hour after hour. Disappointed with his own practice, and feeling critical of Quanhou’s sleeping, Yicun finally expressed his feelings to his friend. Quanhou chided Yicun for sitting like a clay statue, and urged him to get some sleep himself.

Then Yicun confessed that his heart was not at peace, and Quanhou suggested that Yicun bring up his current understanding of Zen for him to check.

Yicun said, “I first studied with Master Yanguan and, hearing him teach on form and emptiness, I found an entrance. Then I heard Dongshan’s poem and was struck by his saying, ‘Avoid seeking outside, for that’s far from the self.’ Then later I asked Master Deshan if I should make distinctions between the different vehicles of the ancestors or not. He struck me and then said, “What are you talking about?” At

that moment I had the experience of the bottom falling out of a bucket of water.”

Quanhou said, “Haven’t you heard that what comes in through the front gate is not the family treasure?”

After a pause Yicun said, “Then what should I do?”

Quanhou said, “If you want to spread the great teaching, it has to flow out from your own heart. Then it will completely cover heaven and earth.”

When Yicun heard these words he had a deep awakening. He made a full bow, then got up and cried out, “Today Turtle Mountain has finally fulfilled the Way! Today Turtle Mountain has finally fulfilled the Way!”

Dogen said:

Today Turtle Mountain has finally fulfilled the Way.

One demon died, another demon (appears).

After the two friends parted, Quanhou went to teach on Cliff Top (Yantou) Mountain in Ezhou (Hubei).

Yicun made his way back to his native region of Fuzhou where he continued his practice in a solitary hermitage on Lotus Mountain. As his reputation grew, and he began to attract the attention of local officials, he was made abbot of a new monastery beneath Snow Peak (Xuefeng) on Elephant Bone Mountain. This became his main teaching site, and was soon to grow into one of the largest training centers in the region.

Once Master Xuefeng Yicun asked a newly arrived monk, “Where are you from?”

The monk said, “From Spirit Light Monastery.”

Xuefeng said, “In the daytime we have sunlight, in the evening we have lamplight. What is ‘spirit light’?”

The monk didn’t answer.

Xuefeng said, “Sunlight, lamplight.”

One day a monk asked Master Xuefeng, “When you visited your masters, what was it that you attained that put an end to your search?”

Xuefeng said, “I went with empty hands and I returned with empty hands.”

Once a monk brought up a teaching of Master Dongshan: when the master had been asked which of the three bodies of the Buddha did not fall into the myriad things, he had replied, “I am always intimate with this.” The monk asked Master Xuefeng the meaning.

Xuefeng hit the monk. Then he said, “I have also been to Cave Mountain” (Dongshan).

One day a monk asked Master Xuefeng, “When one's understanding turns around, what's it like?”

The master said, “The boat monk fell in the river.”

Once a monk coming to question Master Xuefeng began to say, “The ancients had a saying...”

The master immediately lay down. After a while he got up and asked, “What were you saying?”

As the monk started to repeat the question, the master said, “Wasting your life; drowning in the waves.”

Once Xuefeng asked a monk, “Where are you going?”

The monk replied, “I’m going to do community work.”

The master said, “Go.”

Master Hongzhi comments:

Don’t move. If you move I’ll give you thirty blows.

Why is this so? For a luminous jewel without flaw,
if you carve a pattern, its virtue is lost.

Dogen said:

For a luminous jewel without flaw, if polished its glow increases.

One day Master Xuefeng asked a newly arrived monk, "Where did you come from?"

The monk replied, "From across the mountains."

The master asked, "Have you met Bodhidharma?"

The monk said, "Blue sky, bright sun."

The master asked, "How about yourself?"

The monk said, "What more do you want?"

The master hit him.

Master Xuefeng asked another monk, "Where did you come from?"

The monk replied, "From Jiangxi."

The master asked, "How far is Jiangxi from here?"

The monk said, "Not far."

The master held up his whisk and said, "Is there any space for this?"

The monk said, "If there were space for that, then Jiangxi would be far away."

The master hit him.

Once a monk asked Master Xuefeng, "How is it when the arrow is about to leave the bow?"

The master said, "When the archer is an expert, he doesn't try to hit the target."

The monk asked, "If all people don't aim for the target, what will happen?"

The master said, "You're an expert only according to your talent."

Once a monk left Snow Peak and went to visit Master Lingyun Zhiqin, a disciple of Master Guishan, who taught in the same region of Fuzhou. The monk asked Master Lingyun, "Before the Awakened One was born, what was he?"

Lingyun lifted his whisk.

The monk asked, "What was he after he was born?"

Lingyun again lifted his whisk.

The monk then returned to Master Xuefeng on Snow Peak.

Master Xuefeng said, "You just left and you're already back. Isn't this too soon?"

The monk said, "Master Lingyun's answers didn't satisfy me."

When the master inquired, the monk told the story. Then Master Xuefeng said, "Put the question to me."

The monk asked, "Before the Awakened One was born, what was he?"

The master lifted his whisk.

The monk asked, "What was he after he was born?"

The master put down his whisk.

The monk bowed.

The master hit him.

One day a monk pleaded, "Master, please express what I cannot express myself."

The Master Xuefeng said, "For the sake of the teaching, I have to save you!" Then he lifted his whisk and shook it before the monk.

Another time a monk asked Master Xuefeng, "What do you think of the idea that lifting up a fly whisk is not teaching Zen?"

The master lifted up his whisk.

On the edge of Snow Peak a monk built a hermitage and practiced there alone for several years, living simply and no longer shaving his head. He carved out a wooden ladle which he used to scoop up drinking water from the nearby stream.

One day while he was scooping up water, a monk from the monastery came by and asked him, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from India?"

The hermit said, "As the stream bed is deep, the ladle handle is long."

The monk returned and told this to Master Xuefeng.

The master said, "This is rare and wondrous. Nevertheless, this old monk should go and check him out to be sure."

The next day Master Xuefeng went to visit the hermit, accompanied by an attendant who carried a razor. When they found the hermit, the master said to him, "If you can say something, I won't shave your head."

The hermit thereupon washed his hair in the stream. Master Xuefeng then shaved his head.

Once Master Sansheng Huiran came to visit. He asked Master Xuefeng, "What does a golden-scaled fish that passes though the net eat?"

Xuefeng said, "I'll tell you when you come out of the net."

Sansheng said, "The teacher of hundreds of monks and you can't say a turning word!"

Xuefeng said, "This old monk is busy with abbot's affairs."

Another time the two masters took a walk in the woods and saw a band of monkeys. Master Xuefeng said, "Each of these monkeys carries an ancient mirror."

Master Sansheng said, "The vast eon has no name. How come you bring out ancient mirrors?"

Xuefeng said, "Now it has a scratch."

Sansheng said, "Hundreds of practitioners can't understand your talk."

Xuefeng said, "This old monk is busy with abbot's affairs."

Once when Master Xuefeng and a group of students were walking to the local village to do some work, they encountered a band of monkeys on the road. The master said, "Each of these monkeys carries an ancient mirror, but they come to break off the tops of my rice plants!"

Once in a talk in the monk's hall, Master Xuefeng said, "If the world is ten feet wide, then the ancient mirror is ten feet wide. If the world is one foot wide then the ancient mirror is one foot wide."

His disciple Shibei then pointed to fireplace and said, "Then how wide is the fireplace?"

The master said, "As wide as the ancient mirror."

One day Master Xuefeng ascended the hall and addressed the community saying, "On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed (poisonous) snake. All of you here should take a careful look at it."

The monk Wenyan then came forward, threw down a staff in front of the master, and mocked a gesture of fright.

The monk Huileng came forward and said, "Today in the hall there are many who are losing their bodies and lives."

Later when Master Xuansha Shibei heard about it, he said, "Why do you need South Mountain?"

Master Xuefeng attracted the attention of the highest official of the surrounding province of Min, Wei Chubin, and eventually his reputation even reached the imperial court, who bestowed official honors on the master. In the waning years of the Tang Dynasty, as the central government became weaker, a military leader named Wang Chao assumed control of the Min region, and it became an essentially independent kingdom. Wang Chao was an avid supporter of Buddhism, and specifically promoted Master Xuefeng's teaching. When Wang passed away he was succeeded by his brother, Wang Shenzhi, who became a personal student of the master and assured the master's prominence.

As monks fled the political turmoil in the north of China, many gathered in the hospitable kingdom of Min, and began to share teaching stories of the Zen tradition. The first written compilation of such stories, the *Ancestor's Hall Collection*, originated in this region not long after Master Xuefeng's illustrious career, and the dominance of his reputation is clearly preserved. Both the author of this first collection, as well as the author of the even more influential later compilation, the

Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp, were descendants of Master Xuefeng, and the teaching dialogues of the master and his immediate disciples dominate the latter parts of these records.

Luopu Yuanan (834-898)

Master Luopu Yuanan came from Linyou (Jiangxi). After ordination at twenty and a thorough grounding in scripture and doctrine, Yuanan turned his attention to Zen practice. He first studied under Linji Yixuan in the north and served as his attendant. Master Linji approved Yuanan's understanding but eventually Yuanan wanted to travel and meet other teachers.

When Yuanan was preparing to leave, Master Linji asked him, "Where are you going?"

Yuanan answered, "I'm going south."

Linji took his staff and drew a circle in the air. Then he said, "Pass through this and then go."

Yuanan shouted.

Linji hit him.

Yuanan bowed and then left.

Yuanan travelled south to Hunan. When he came to Mt. Jia, where the Master Jiashan Shanhui was teaching, he decided to build a hut there and practice on his own, but without ever visiting the master. After practicing alone for a year, Yuanan finally decided to check out Master Jiashan.

When Yuanan came before the master he didn't bow but just folded his hands and stood there.

Master Jiashan said, "A chicken is roosting in a phoenix's nest. They aren't the same species. Go away."

Yuanan said, "I've come from afar to experience your teaching style. I ask you to please receive me."

The master said, "Before me there is no you. Before you there is no me."

Yuanan shouted.

The master said, "Oh stop it! Don't be crude. It's true that the moon, even when covered by clouds, remains the same. But every valley and peak beneath it is different. You may be able to cut off the tongues of everyone on earth, but can you make a tongueless man talk?"

Yuanan was unsure how to respond.

The master hit him.

Yuanan then bowed to the master and became his disciple.

Yuanan lived and studied with Master Jiashan for several years. After finally leaving Mt. Jia he traveled to Cenyong where he stayed with an old friend. They began to talk about the Wuchang era persecution of Buddhism, and how they had dealt with it. His friend asked, "Where did you hide yourself during the persecution?"

Yuanan said, "I just remained in the middle of the market."

The friend said, "Why didn't you go to where there aren't any people?"

Yuanan said, "What problems are there where there aren't any people?"

The friend asked, "How did you avoid trouble in the middle of the market?"

Yuanan said, "Although I was in the market, no one knew me."

The friend said, "If the teachings of the awakened sages were not concealed, what would happen?"

Yuanan said, "Before an old rustic's door, there's no talk of the affairs of the royal court."

His friend asked, "What do you mean?"

Yuanan said, "If one doesn't meet others, after all, nothing is revealed."

His friend then asked, "When someone who is not from the royal court arrives and you meet him, can you speak with him or not?"

Yuanan said, “The immeasurable function is revealed in arduous circumstances.”

Yunan eventually settled on Mt. Luopo in Lizhou (Hunan) and began to teach. He attracted numerous students from all over China.

Master Luopo Yuanan once heard about the phrase of Master Yunju that said, “When expounding there is no path of practice. When practicing there is no path of expounding. When neither expounding nor practicing, what kind of path is that?”

Luopo said, “If both practice and expounding arrive, there is no original matter. If neither practice nor expounding arrive, the original matter exists.”

Dogen said:

If both practice and expounding arrive, the country prospers.

If neither practice nor expounding arrive, buddhas and ancestors confirm you.

Hongzhi Zhengjue said:

If you want to practice, just practice; if you want to expound, just expound.

Suppose someone asked, “What is this: wanting to practice, just practice?”

I would say “Walk on.”

If someone asked, “What is this: wanting to expound, just expound?”

I would say, “Ah!”

Once Master Luopo said to the assembly, “A stone person is like you, and sings a melodious song. You are like a stone person, and are in harmony with the music of the snow.”

Disciples of Linji

Master Sansheng Huiran was a prominent disciple of Master Linji Yixuan, and he compiled the record of his master’s teachings. After Linji’s death Huiran traveled to many other teachers to refine his understanding, including the elder Master Changsha Jingcen, and the masters Yangshan, Xiangyan, and Xuefeng. Later he returned north to

teach at Sansheng Monastery in Zhenzhou (Hebei province), the same region where he had trained with Master Linji..

When Huiran arrived at Mt. Yang, Master Yangshan asked, “What’s your name?”

Huiran said, “Huiji.”

Yangshan said, “Huiji is my name!”

Huiran said, “Oh, then my name is Huiran.”

Yangshan laughed.

When Huiran went to visit Master Xiangyan, the master asked, “Where are you from?”

Huiran said, “From Linji.”

Xiangyan said, “Did you bring Linji’s shout?”

Huiran picked up a cushion and struck Xiangyan in the mouth with it.”

Master Xinghua Cunjiang (830-888) was another prominent disciple of Master Linji. He taught at Xinghua Monastery in the northern region of Weizhou (near the Yellow River in modern Shandong Province).

Once Master Xinghua asked a monk, “Where are you coming from?”

The monk said, “From a severe Zen place.”

Xinghua asked, “Did you bring the shout of the severe Zen place?”

The monk said, “I didn’t bring it.”

Xinghua said, “Then you haven’t come from there.”

The monk shouted.

Xinghua hit him.

Master Xinghua once addressed his community saying, “I’m always hearing shouts in the corridors, and in the back of the hall. Stop blindly shouting wild shouts! Even if you shout so loud that it takes my breath

away and stops me cold, when my breath comes back I'll just tell you, "Still not it!" Why? I haven't been handing out precious gems in fancy wrappings to all of you! What's all the shouting about?

Disciples of Yangshan

Master Nanta Guangyong (850-938) was from Fengcheng City in Jiangxi. As a novice he lived at Dongping Monastery in Hongzhou when Master Yangshan was serving as abbot there, but after ordination he went to study with Master Linji Yixuan. Later Linji directed him back to Master Yangshan, (after Yangshan had moved to Mt. Yang), and Guangyong became Yangshan's attendant, disciple, and later successor to the abbotship of South Pagoda (Nanta) Monastery on Mt. Yang.

One day a monk asked Master Nanta Guangyong, "Manjushri Bodhisattva was the teacher of the seven buddhas. Did Manjushri have a teacher as well?"

Master Nanta said, "Manjushri was subject to conditions, and therefore had a teacher."

The monk asked, "Who was Manjushri's teacher?"

Nanta held up his whisk.

The monk said, "Is that all?"

Nanta put down his whisk and clasped his hands.

Master Xita Guangmu was another disciple of Master Yangshan. Little is recorded of his life, but he is also said to have taught on Mt. Yang.

Once a monk asked Master Xita, "What is the proper teaching?"

Xita said, "It doesn't enter through your ear."

The monk said, “How can that be?”
Xita said, “Can you hear it?”

One day a monk asked Master Xita, “What’s the essential meaning of Zen.?”

The master said, “There's no awakened nature.”

The monk asked, “Then what is sudden enlightenment?”

Xita drew a circle on the ground.

The monk asked, “What is gradual enlightenment?”

Xita poked the middle of the empty circle three times.”

Xuansha Shibe (835-908)

Master Xuansha Shibe came from Fuzhou on China’s eastern seaboard. Unlike most famous monks who generally came from aristocratic and educated families, he was said to have been the third son of a family called “Xie” who lived by fishing. As a young man, he lived as a fisherman on the Nantai River.

Dogen said:

He never expected the Golden Fish, which is never hooked,
but jumps into the boat of itself.

At the relatively late age of twenty-five he left his lay life and entered a monastery on Lotus Mountain to study with Master Lingxun, a disciple of Xuefeng. After receiving full ordination at a monastery in Hongzhou (Jiangxi), he returned to continue his practice with Lingxun.

Shibe distinguished himself early on for his dedication to a life of simplicity, only wearing patched robes and straw sandals, and often skipping the evening meal. Because of this he was known as “Dhuta” Bei (“Dhuta” being an ancient Sanskrit designation for monks following

the highest standards of simplicity). He was said to have had a deep realization on reading the Surangama Sutra.

After a year on Lotus Mountain, Shibei moved on to Elephant Bone Mountain where he began to train with Master Xuefeng Yicun, shortly after the master had established his teaching center there. The two formed a close teacher-student relationship and Shibei helped Master Xuefeng develop the monastery into a flourishing training center.

Shibei eventually decided to travel on pilgrimage to visit other masters, but just after starting out on a mountain trail he hit his toe on a rock and it started to bleed. Feeling the pain, he asked himself, “The body does not exist; where does the pain come from?” and suddenly he had a profound awakening. He then turned back and returned to the monastery.

When Master Xuefeng saw him, he asked, “What is ‘Dhuta’ Bei doing here?”

Shibei said, “From now on, I won’t deceive people.”

The master then asked, “Why isn’t Dhuta Bei going on the journey to visit other temples?”

Shibei said, “Bodhidharma didn’t come east. The second ancestor didn’t go to India.” The master approved.

After some years with Master Xuefeng, Shibei left to begin teaching on his own at nearby Primordial (Xuansha) Monastery. Master Xuefeng was still in the height of his teaching career, and so the two masters taught concurrently, remaining close friends and occasionally sharing students.

Once Master Xuefeng entered the hall and said to the assembly, “This matter is like a single rice field. Completely trust your own sowing and cultivation. There is nobody who does not receive benefit from this.”

When this was brought up to Master Xuansha Shibei, the master said, “It’s like a contract is signed to sell this single field. The whole field has been sold except for one tree at the very center, but you still own the tree.”

One day Master Xuefeng said to the assembly, “All awakened ones in the three worlds turn the teaching wheel in the midst of fire.”

Master Xuansha said in response, “When the fire expounds teaching, all awakened ones in the three worlds stand and listen.”

Once when Xuansha was visiting with Master Xuefeng, they took a walk amongst some fields. At one point, Xuefeng pointed to the ground in front of him and said, “This patch of land may be suitable for building a seamless monument.”

Xuansha said, “How high should it be?”

Xuefeng looked up and down.

Xuansha said, “It’s not that you don’t have a good influence on humans and heavenly beings, but you haven’t even dreamed of the Buddha affirming the awakening of Mahakasyapa on Vulture Peak.”

Xuefeng said, “How would you say it?”

Xuansha said, “Seven or eight feet.”

Another time the two masters took a walk in the mountains. Master Xuefeng said, “I want to make this place my eternal home.”

Xuansha said, “Indeed, this place is clearly suitable for a seamless monument.”

Xuefeng immediately made a gesture of measuring.

Xuansha said, “That’s alright, but I don’t see it that way.”

Xuefeng asked, “How do you see it?”

Xuansha said, “It’s built!”

Xuefeng remarked, “Good, good.”

After Master Xuansha has established a community, he often taught with the saying, “The entire universe in the ten directions is one bright pearl.” Once a monk asked him, “Master, you often say that the entire universe in the ten directions is one bright pearl. How can a student like me understand this?”

The master said, “The entire universe in the ten directions is one bright pearl. What is the use of understanding?”

The next day Master Xuansha asked the monk, “The entire universe in ten directions is one bright pearl. How do you understand this?”

The monk replied “The entire universe in ten directions is one bright pearl. What is the use of understanding?”

The master said, “Now I know that you are living in the cave of demons on the black mountain.”

Dogen said:

This grass or that tree are not grass and tree, nor are the mountains and rivers of the world mountains and rivers; they are one bright pearl...do not doubt that you yourself are the bright pearl by thinking, “I am not the bright pearl.” Confusion and doubts, affirmations and negations, these are nothing but the ephemeral, small responses of ordinary folk; however, still, they are the bright pearl appearing as small, ephemeral responses...

Xuansha’s expression has made it clear that our own minds and bodies are the one bright pearl, and so we realize that our minds are not “ours.” Who can be anxious as to whether birth and death are, or are not, the bright pearl? Even if there is doubt or anxiety, they are the bright pearl. There is not a single activity or thought that is not the bright pearl, and, consequently, both advancing and retreating in the cave of demons on Back Mountain is nothing but the one bright pearl.

One day a monk asked Master Xuansha, “What is it? And why is it hard to realize?”

The master said, “It’s too close.”

Once Master Xuansha said to the assembly, “Nowadays all Zen successors say they have received the teaching from Sakyamuni Buddha. I say that I practice together with Sakyamuni and the third son of Xie. You tell me, in what assembly do we practice together?”

When the monk Daofu first came to study with Master Xuansha he said, “Having just arrived, I beg the master to point out a gate through which I may enter.”

The master said, “Do you hear the sound of flowing water in the creek?”

Daofu said, “I hear it.”

The master said, “Enter here.”

Baofu Congzhan (d. 928)

Master Baofu Congzhan grew up in Fuzhou, the same region as Elephant Bone Mountain, and came to study with Master Xuefeng as a novice of fifteen. After full ordination he traveled to other regions, and then returned to Snow Peak and stayed for many years.

One day Master Xuefeng said to the assembly, “At Wide View Pavilion I have met with all of you. On Crow Rock Peak I have met with all of you. In front of the monk’s hall I have met with all of you.”

Later Congzhan brought this up with his fellow student Zhifu, asking him, “Putting aside the monk’s hall, how was your meeting with Master Xuefeng at Wide View Pavilion and Crow Rock Peak?”

Zhifu quickly walked to the abbot’s quarters. Congzhan immediately returned to the monk’s hall.

Once Congzhan was walking along a river with his fellow monk Huileng, another student of Xuefeng. Huileng said to Congzhan, “Seeing form is no other than seeing mind. Do you see that boat?”

Congzhan said, “Yes, I do.”

Huileng said, “Putting the boat aside, what is mind?”

Congzhan pointed to the boat.

Another time Huileng said to Congzhan, “Even if we say that sages still have three poisons, we shouldn’t say that awakened ones have two kinds of speech. I don’t say that awakened ones don’t speak, just that they don’t have two kinds of speech.”

Congzhan asked, “What is an awakened one’s speech?”

Huileng said, “How can a deaf person hear it?”

Congzhan said, “Now I know that you’re speaking from the secondary.”

Huileng asked, “What is an awakened one’s speech?”

Congzhan said, “Have a cup of tea.”

Eventually some of the official attention surrounding Master Xuefeng and his community came to rest on Congzhan, and he was invited to become the founding abbot of Protecting Abundance (Baofu) Temple which was built for him in Zhangzhou (in Fujian Province). This became his teaching center, and he was said to have had hundreds of students.

A monk once asked Master Baofu Congzhan, “During all hours of the day how should one be watchful?”

The master said, “Be watchful like you are now.”

The monk said, “But why can’t I see something?”

The master said, “Quit poking your eyes and calling the spots you see flowers!”

Changqing Huileng (854-932)

Master Changqing Huileng came from Yanzhou (in modern Zhejiang province). He became a novice at thirteen in nearby Suzhou, and later traveled to the newly independent kingdom of Min (Fujian) to visit Zen teachers. One of them was Master Lingyun Zhiqin, the disciple of Guishan, who told him, “Before the affairs of the donkey have left, the affair of the horse has arrived.”

Eventually Huileng came to study with Master Xuefeng. After some time studying with both the elder master and his main disciple Xuansha Shibei, Huileng remained unsatisfied and requested help. Master Xuefeng said, “I’ll give you medicine that would revive a dead horse.

Can you swallow it?” Huileng said he would do whatever the master asked of him. Xuefeng told him to stop coming to see him everyday, and instead just devote himself to sitting practice, putting his body and mind at rest for several years, and that then he would surely discover something.

After dedicated practice for two and a half years, one day Huileng was rolling up a bamboo window screen and, looking out, suddenly had a deep realization. Soon after he wrote a verse to express it:

How extraordinary!
Having rolled up a screen all the earth is revealed.
If anyone asks me to explain what I understand,
I'll hit him in the mouth with a fly whisk.

Huileng presented his poem to Master Xuefeng, who then shared it with Xuansha to get his opinion. Xuansha wasn't satisfied, so that night at a gathering, Master Xuefeng asked Huileng to share his understanding with the assembly. Huileng recited this poem:

Amidst the ten thousand things, the single body is revealed.
When affirmed, only then is there intimacy.
In the past I mistakenly searched for the Way.
Now I see it's like ice in fire.

When Huileng next went to see Xuefeng in his quarters, the master asked him, "What is it?"

Huileng said, "The weather is clear, it's a good day for community work."

Xuansha heard about it and said, "Your answer is in harmony with the great mystery."

Huileng stayed with Xuefeng for twenty-nine years, until finally selected for attention by the ruling elite. Then, at the invitation of Wang Yanhan, the governor of Quanzhou and the nephew of the Min ruler Wang Shenchi (who was a student of both Master Xuefeng and Master Xuansha), Huileng became abbot of Eternal Celebration (Changqing) Monastery and taught there for twenty years. This monastery housed hundreds of monks, largely made up of followers of Master Xuefeng and his disciples, as well as provided a gathering place

for the ministers and literati of Min society. It was here, twenty years after the death of Master Changqing Huileng, that the first compilation of Zen dialogue stories, the *Ancestor's Hall Collection*, was written.

Taiyuan Fu (dates unknown)

Master Taiyuan Fu came from Shanxi Province in the northwest. He had been a lecturer on the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* in his early career.

When he became disillusioned with the scholarly path, he turned to Zen practice and devoted himself to sitting. One morning he experienced a deep awakening on hearing the sound of a gong. After this he traveled to many Zen Monasteries around the country, eventually coming to Snow Peak on Elephant Bone Mountain.

When Fu first arrived at Master Xuefeng's monastery, the monks were enjoying a donation of sugarcane. The monk Huileng approached him and asked, "From where have you come?"

Fu said, "From beyond the mountains."

Huileng said, "A difficult journey. What did you carry with you?"

Fu said, "Sugarcane! Sugarcane!"

Master Xuefeng once asked Fu, "I understand that Master Linji has three phrases. Is that true?"

Fu said, "Yes."

Xuefeng said, "What's the first one?"

Fu stared directly at the master.

Xuefeng said, "That's the second phrase, 'What's the first?'"

Fu clasped his hands and left.

Xuefeng approved. Fu was appointed bath attendant and stayed on for many years.

One day the monk Congzhan was cutting a melon when Fu came by.

Congzhan said, "If you say the right thing I'll give you a piece."
Fu said, "Give me one."
Congzhan gave him a piece of melon.
Fu took it and walked away.

Once senior monk Fu asked the monk Shanyan (later of Gushan),
"Where are the nostrils you had before your parents were born?"
Shanyan said, "Born right now."
Fu didn't approve. He said, "You ask me and I'll tell you."
Shanyan said, "Where are the nostrils you had before your parents
were born?"
Fu just fanned himself.

Eventually Fu returned to his native region of Shanxi where he lived
at Expressing Gratitude (Bao'en) Monastery in Taiyuan, although he
never assumed the position of abbot at any training center.

Other Disciples of Xuefeng

Master Cuiyan Lingcan came from Anji in modern Zhejiang
province. He became a prominent student of Master Xuefeng and was
appointed head monk, which entailed giving talks to the community.

At the end of a summer practice period at Xuefeng Monastery,
Lingcan said to the other monks, "Throughout the summer I've been
speaking to you about everything under the sun. Now I ask, do I still
have eyebrows?" (which are said to fall out when one lies).

Yunmen said:
Barrier.

After his training with Xuefeng, Lingcan taught at Emerald Cliff (Cuiyan) in Mingzhou (the area of modern Ningbo City in Zhejiang Province).

One day a monk asked Master Cuiyan Lingcan, “There are words and phrases everywhere and all of it is polluted. What is the higher truth?”

Cuiyan said, “There are words and phrases everywhere and all of it is polluted.”

The monk asked, “Where is the place where there are none?”

Cuiyan said, “The assembly is laughing at you.”

Once a monk asked, “When all the words and phrases of the mysterious function are exhausted, but the central matter of our school’s great vehicle is not understood, then what?”

Cuiyan said, “Bow.”

The monk said, “I don’t understand.”

Cuiyan said, “You’ve left home to go on pilgrimage but you still don’t know how to bow?”

Master Jingqing Daofu (868-937) came from Yongjia (in modern Zhejiang). He practiced for many years with Master Xuefeng, and also received teaching from Master Xuansha. After his training with those teachers, Daofu taught in Yuezhou (in Zhejiang) at Mirror Clarity (Jingqing) Monastery.

One day Master Jingqing Daofu asked a monk, “What is the sound outside the gate?”

The monk said, “The sound of raindrops.”

Jingqing said, “All people have it backwards - unaware of their own selves they chase after objects.”

The monk asked, “How about yourself, Master?”

Jingqing said, “I’m on the brink of falling into delusion about myself.”

The monk asked, “What do you mean by ‘on the brink’?”

Jingqing said, “To bring out the body is easy. To be free from the body is difficult.”

Yunmen Wenyan (864-949)

Master Yunmen Wenyan was born and raised in Jianxing, a town between Shanghai and Hangzhou on China’s eastern coast. On reaching adolescence, he decided to enter the monkhood, and became a novice at the local temple. He focused on studying the codes of monastic discipline (vinaya) with his first teacher, Zhicheng, and eventually received full ordination at a temple near Suzhou. Afterwards he returned to serve as Zhicheng’s attendant, continuing his vinaya studies and beginning to lecture on them.

At some point in his mid-twenties, Wenyan decided to investigate Zen teaching, and he traveled seventy miles upriver from Hangzhou to the town of Muzhou to seek out the aged and reclusive master called “Elder Chen”. This master, also known as Muzhou Daoming, had been a prominent disciple of Master Huangbo, but after a career as monastic abbot he had since left the monkhood and supported himself by making sandals. Now quite old and living a reclusive life in a one-room hermitage, Master Chen refused to see Wenyan despite the young monk's repeated attempts at having a meeting. But Wenyan was persistent and again knocked on his door.

Master Chen said, “Who is it?”

Wenyan replied, “It’s me, Wenyan.”

The master opened the door but blocked the entrance and said, “Why do you keep coming?”

Wenyan said, “I’m not yet clear about myself.”

The master said, “That's completely useless trash!,” pushed Wenyan away, and slammed the door shut.

At this, Wenyan had a deep realization.

Wenyan stayed on to practice and study with Master Chen for several years, and was deeply influenced by his simple style of living and direct, dramatic expression. Eventually Master Chen sent Wenyan to study with the renowned Master Xuefeng Yicun for further training.

There at the monastery at Snow Peak, Wenyan spent a number of years sharpening his insight and honing his conduct with Master Xuefeng, before finally leaving on pilgrimage in his late thirties. He then visited a number of teachers, particularly seeking out several prominent disciples of Master Dongshan Liangjie, including Caoshan Benji, Sushan Guangren, Tiantong Xianqi, and Yuezhou Qianfeng.

When Wenyan was forty-seven he made a pilgrimage to Cao Creek, the teaching site of the legendary Master Huineng, in far southern China. In the nearby city of Shaozhou, Wenyan met a master named Rumin who was abbot of Inspiration Planting (Lingshu) Monastery.

The two became close friends, and Wenyan became the head monk at this monastery. Seven years later, just before Rumin passed away, the abbot wrote a letter to his supporter, the regional ruler Liu Yan (who had begun to declare himself Emperor Gaozu) requesting that Wenyan be approved as the new abbot of Lingshu. Gaozu approved, and soon became an avid supporter of Wenyan, inviting him to the court of the newly independent “Southern Han” empire in Guangzhou for honors.

Thus Wenyan began his teaching career as abbot of Lingshu Monastery. But after four years at this post he decided that the frequent receiving and entertaining of visitors at this socially prominent monastery was too distracting for him and his students. Having received permission from Gaozu, Wenyan sought and found a more secluded place nearby for a training center, and, on the ruler's orders, construction was begun on a new monastery at Cloud Gate (Yunmen) Mountain.. In a few years the new center was built, and here Wenyan, now called Master Yunmen, lived and taught for the remainder of his life.

Only three years after Master Yunmen's death, the first compilation of the teaching dialogues of the Zen tradition, *The Ancestor's Hall*

Collection, was first created, and the more extensive and influential collection, *The Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp*, was composed some fifty years later. The relative close proximity in time of these records to the life of Master Yunmen meant that a large selection of his teaching words were available, were likely relatively accurate, and were fresh in the minds of the Zen community. The fact that he was associated with the lineage of Master Xuefeng, a wide family that also included the authors of these collections, helped ensure that his teachings had a prominent place in the records. But it must have been the brevity, forcefulness, and startling unusualness of his expression that led to their immense popularity, celebrated more than the teachings of his contemporaries, and to the fact that there are more sayings attributed to Master Yunmen in the records of the Zen tradition than any other master.

One day a student asked Master Yunmen Wenyan, “What is the teaching of the Buddha’s whole lifetime?”

The master said, “Speaking in tune with the particular occasion.”

Someone once asked Master Yunmen, “Since ancient times, the old worthies have transmitted mind by mind. Today I ask you, master: What method do *you* use?”

The master said, “When there’s a question, there’s an answer.”

The questioner continued, “In this case, it isn’t a wasted method.”

The master said, “No question, no answer.”

Once the Southern Han Emperor Gaozu summoned Master Yunmen to the capital for an audience. The Emperor asked, “What is Zen all about?”

Master Yunmen said, “Your Majesty has the question, and your servant the monk has the answer.”

The Emperor inquired, “What answer?”

The master replied, "I request Your Majesty to reflect upon the words your servant just uttered."

One day someone asked Master Yunmen, "When you make offerings to the arhats, do they come?"

The master said, "If you don't ask, I don't answer."

The questioner continued, "Please master, tell me!"

The master said, "Join your hands in greeting in front of the main gate, and offer incense in the Buddha hall."

Once someone asked Master Yunmen, "What's my central concern?"

The master said, "I have sincerely accepted your question."

Another time someone asked Yunmen, "What is most urgent for me?"

The master said, "The very *you* who is afraid that he doesn't know."

Someone once asked Master Yunmen, "Though *this* is constantly my most pressing concern, I cannot find any way in. Please, master, show me a way in."

The master said, "Just in you present concern there is a way in."

Once Master Yunmen said to the assembly, "In the lands of all ten directions there is nothing but the teaching of the 'One Vehicle'. Tell me, is your self inside or outside the one vehicle?"

On behalf of a silent audience he said, "Come in!"

Then he added, "There you are!"

Another time someone said, "Please master, show me a way in!"

Master Yunmen said, "Slurping gruel, eating rice."

Once Master Yunmen said, "You, just you, who everyday take your bowl and eat rice - what do you call 'rice'? Where is there a single grain of rice?"

Master Yunmen once brought up this story:

“Master Xuefeng said, 'There are many who sit by a rice bucket starving to death, and many who sit by a river dying of thirst.' Master Xuansha commented, 'There are many sitting inside a rice bucket starving to death, and many submerged in water still dying of thirst.'”

Then Master Yunmen said, “The whole body *is* rice, the whole body *is* water!”

Once at a donated meal Master Yunmen asked the monks, “Forget about all the phrases that you’ve learned in the monasteries and tell me: how does my food taste?”

On behalf of the silent monks he said, “There’s too little salt and vinegar on the vegetables.”

One day Master Yunmen said to the assembly: “People learning the teaching of awakening are innumerable like the grains of sand in the Ganges River. Come on, stand out and make a statement from the tops of the hundred blades of grass.”

No one in the assembly responded.

On behalf of the silent assembly, the master said, “All inseparable.”

Once someone asked Master Yunmen, “What is the eye of the genuine teaching?”

The master said, “Everywhere!”

Another time someone asked, “What is the eye of the genuine teaching?”

Master Yunmen said, “The steam of rice gruel.”

Once someone asked Master Yunmen, “How should one act during every hour of the day such that the ancestors are not betrayed?”

The master said, "Give up your effort."

The questioner asked, "How should I give up my effort?"

The master said, "Give up the words you just uttered."

Someone once asked Master Yunmen, "What does 'sitting correctly and contemplating true reality' mean?"

The master said, "A coin lost in the river is found in the river."

One day someone asked Master Yunmen, "What is the place from which all the awakened ones come?"

The master said, "Where the east mountains walk on the river."

Another time someone asked, "What is the place from which all the awakened ones come?"

Master Yunmen said, "Next question, please."

Once a monk asked Master Yunmen, "What is 'each-and-every-particle samadhi'?"

The master said, "Rice in the bowl; water in the bucket."

One day someone asked Master Yunmen, "What is Zen?"

The Master replied, "That's it!"

The questioner went on, "What is the Way?"

The master said, "Okay!"

Another time someone asked Master Yunmen, "What is Zen?"

The master said, "Is it alright if we get rid of this word?"

Once a monk asked Master Yunmen, "When one does not give rise to a single thought, is there any mistake?"

The master said, "Mt. Sumeru."

Master Yunmen was once asked by a monk, "Birth-and-death is here; how should I cope with it?"

The master said, "Where is it?"

Someone asked Master Yunmen, “I am definitely on the wrong track. Please, master, give some instruction.”

The master said, “What are you talking about?”

One day someone asked Master Yunmen, “What is the Buddha’s body?”

The master said, “A piece of dried shit.”

A monk once asked, “What is that which goes beyond the 'Truth-body'?”

Master Yunmen said, “It’s easy to talk about ‘going beyond.’ But what do you mean by 'Truth-body’?”

The monk said, “Please, master, consider my question.”

The master said, “I’m considering. But first - what can you say about the Truth-body?”

The monk said, “It’s just this.”

The master said, “That’s just something you’ve heard hanging out on the long bench in the monk’s hall. Let me ask you: can the Truth-body eat rice?”

The monk was speechless.

Once a monk asked Master Yunmen, “Will you say something that goes beyond the awakened ones and ancestral sages?”

The master said, “Sesame cake.”

When Master Yunmen saw a monk reading a scripture with the characters “dragon treasury” on it, he asked the monk, “What is it that comes out of the dragon's treasury?”

The monk had no answer.

The master said, “Ask me, I’ll tell you.”

So the monk asked, and the master replied, “What comes out is a dead frog.”

On behalf of the baffled monk he said, “A fart.”

Again he said, “Steam-buns and stream-cakes.”

Once someone asked the master, “What is it like when one sees that the three realms are nothing but mind, and the myriad things are merely one's cognition?”

Master Yunmen replied, “Hiding in one's tongue.”

One day someone said to Master Yunmen, “I'm not questioning you about the core of the Buddhist doctrine, but I'd like to know what stands at the center of our own tradition.”

The master replied, “Well, you've posed your question; now quickly bow three times.”

Another time someone asked, “Master, would you please tell me what the central meaning of our tradition is?”

Master Yunmen said, “In the South there's Master Xuefeng; in the North, Master Zhaozhou.”

Once Master Yunmen said, “Do you want to know the founding masters?”

Pointing with his staff, he said, “They are jumping around on your heads! Do you want to know their eyeball? It's right under your feet!”

Then he added, “This is offering tea and food to ghosts and spirits. Nevertheless, these ghosts and spirits aren't satisfied.”

Master Yunmen was once asked, “What was Bodhidharma's purpose in coming from India?”

The master replied, “You must be hungry after such a long trip; there's gruel and rice on the long bench.”

Once someone asked Master Yunmen, “What is that which is transmitted separately from the standard teachings of the three vehicles?”

The master said, "If you don't ask me I won't answer. But if you do, I go to India in the morning and return to China in the evening."

Once Master Yunmen went up to the Teaching Hall for a talk and said, "The world is so wide and vast; why do we put on the seven-strip robe at the sound of the bell?"

A novice once asked Master Yunmen, "It's said that one should not leave home without one's parent's consent. How would one then be able to leave home?"

The master said, "Shallow."

The novice said, "I don't understand."

The master said, "Deep."

Someone once said to Master Yunmen, "Ever since I came to your Teaching seat, I just don't understand. Please give me your instruction."

The master said, "May I lop off your head?"

Someone once asked, "If someone killed their own father and mother, they could repent in front of the Buddha. Where can you repent if you kill the Buddha and ancestors?"

Master Yunmen replied, "Clear."

Master Yunmen once quoted a saying from the Zen poem "Faith in Mind": "When mind does not arise, the myriad things have no fault." Then the master said, "That's all he understood!"

Then he raised his staff and added, "Is anything amiss in the whole universe?"

Master Yunmen once held up his staff and said to the assembly, “This staff has turned into a dragon and swallowed the whole universe. The mountains, the rivers, the earth – where are they to be found?”

Someone once asked, “What is it like when everything is swallowed up in one gulp?”

Master Yunmen said, “Then I'm in your belly.”

Master Yunmen once cited Master Xuefeng's words: “The whole world is you. Yet you keep thinking that there is something else.”

Then Yunmen said, “Haven't you read in the Shurangama Sutra where it says, 'sentient beings are all upside-down; they delude themselves and chase after things'?” He added, “If they could handle things, they would be the same as the awakened ones.”

Master Yunmen once spoke to the community quoting the words of Master Danxia Tianran who said: “Every person is in the midst of the radiant light. Yet when they try to look at it, it's not seen – it seems dark and obscure.”

The master then asked, “Where is the radiant light?”

No one responded.

Master Yunmen answered on their behalf saying, “The kitchen storeroom, the main gate.”

Then he added, “I'd rather have nothing.”

At another talk Master Yunmen brought up the words of Master Sengzhao: “Within there is a jewel. It is hidden inside the human body.”

Then the master said, “It picks up the lantern in the Buddha Hall, then puts the temple's main gate on top of it. How about that?”

When no one responded, he said, “If you chase after things, your intentions are carried away.”

One day Master Yunmen brought up this story about one of his teachers:

“A monk once asked Master Yuezhou Qianfeng, 'The honored ones of the ten directions all had a single gateway to ultimate liberation.

Where is this gateway?' Then Master Yuezhou drew a line in the ground with his staff and said, 'Here.'”

Master Yunmen then held up his fan and offered this comment: “This fan jumps to the uppermost heaven and hits the god Indra; when it strikes the carp of the Eastern Sea, the rain pours down in torrents. Do you understand?”

Later someone brought up the same story and asked the master, “The Honored Ones of the ten directions all had a single gateway to ultimate liberation. What is this gateway?”

Master Yunmen said, “I can't tell.”

The questioner asked, “Master, why can't you tell?”

The master said, “If you, just you, present the problem, then I can.”

Once Master Yunmen said, “I'll give you medicine according to your disease.” Then he said, “The whole world is medicine. Where are you, yourself?”

One day during a talk Master Yunmen seized his staff, banged it on the seat, and said, “All sounds are the Awakened One's voice, and all forms are the Awakened One's shape. Yet when you hold your bowl and eat your food, you hold a 'bowl-view'; when you walk you hold a 'walk-view'; and when you sit, you hold a 'sit view.' The whole bunch of you behaves this way!”

Then the master took his staff and drove them all away.

Another time Master Yunmen said, “When a patch-robed monk sees this staff, he just calls it a staff; when he walks, he just walks; and when he sits, he just sits. In all this he cannot be stirred.”

Once when Master Yunmen was giving a talk he mentioned three kinds of people: “The first awakens when hearing a talk, the second awakens when called, and the third turns around and leaves when hearing that anything is brought up. Tell me, what does turning around and going away mean?”

Answering for the assembly, he said, “The third also deserves thirty blows.”

Instructing the community, Master Yunmen said, “It is mentioned once, but then is not talked about anymore. How about that which is mentioned once?”

Answering for the silent assembly, the master said, “Though the capital Chang'an is pleasant, I wouldn't want to live there.”

One day in a talk Master Yunmen said, “I'm not asking you about before the fifteenth day (the full moon); try to say something about after the fifteenth day.”

The master answered on behalf of the assembly, “Every day is a good day.”

Once Master Yunmen questioned the community, saying, “It's been eleven days since you all entered the summer practice period. Well, have you gained an entry yet? What do you say?”

On behalf of the silent monks the master replied, “Tomorrow is the twelfth.”

Once a monk asked Master Yunmen, “Fall is beginning and the summer training period is at its end. If in the future someone were to suddenly question me, how exactly should I respond?”

The master said, “The assembly is adjourned. All of you get out of here!”

The monk asked, "What did I do wrong?"

The master said, "Give me back the money for ninety days' worth of food."

Once Master Yunmen said, "I don't want to hear about before today, nor about after today. Tell me something just about today."

On behalf of the silent assembly, the master said, "Now's the time!"

One day Master Yunmen said, "I'm not asking you about the ultimate truth of the teaching of Awakening. But is there someone here who knows about conventional truth?"

In place of the assembly he answered, "If I say there is such a thing I'll be in trouble with the Venerable Yunmen."

Once Master Yunmen said, "I entangle myself in words with you every day; I can't go on till the night. Come on, ask me a question right here and now!"

In place of his listeners the master said, "I'm just afraid that Venerable Yunmen won't answer."

One day, having entered the Teaching Hall for a formal talk, Master Yunmen sat in silence for a long time. Then he said, "This seriously compromises me," and he got down from his seat and walked out.

Once, when Master Yunmen had finished a talk, he stood up, banged his staff on his chair, and said, "With so many creeping vine-words up to now, what place will I be banished to? Sharp ones understand, but many are being completely fooled by me."

Then he said, "Putting frost on top of snow."

One day Master Yunmen said, “What is a statement that doesn't fool people?”

In place of his listeners he said, “Don't tell me that this was one that did!”

One day in the Teaching Hall, after a long silence, Master Yunmen said, “I'm making a terrible fool of myself.” Then he got down from his seat.

On his way out, speaking for the assembly, he said, “Aha...not just us!”

Once Master Yunmen said to a monk, “The whole universe is a house. How about the master of the house?”

The monk had no answer.

The master said, “Ask me, I'll tell you.”

The monk asked, and the master said, “He has passed away.”

Then the master added, “How many people has he deceived?”

Someone once asked Master Yunmen, “How is it when the tree withers and the leaves fall?”

The master said, “The whole body exposed in the golden autumn wind.”

One day someone asked Master Yunmen, “What is the meaning of the teaching?”

The master said, “The answer is not finished yet.”

Disciples of Yantou Quanhua

Master Luoshan Daoxian came from the city of Xiapu in the eastern coastal province of Fujian. After ordaining as a monk, he traveled

widely and studied with many teachers, most prominatly with Master Shishuang Qingzhu, the disciple of Daowu Yuanzhi, and with Master Yantou Quanhua. (Master Yantou was the disciple of Master Deshan Xuanjian and a close friend and important early mentor to Master Xuefeng Yicun). Daoxian eventually settled and taught on Luo Mountain in his home region.

Once, when visiting Master Shishuang, Daoxian asked the master, “When one can't find a place to go or a place to stay, then what?”

Master Shishuang said, “Give it up completely.”

Daoxian didn't fully understand this answer, and eventually continued his travels. When he arrived at the monastery of Master Yantou, he asked the same question.

Master Yantou said, “Going or staying – of what use is it?”

Upon hearing these words Daoxian had a great realization.

Master Ruiyan Shiyan also came from Fujian Province. He studied first with Master Jiashan Shanhui, before becoming a student of Master Yantou Quanhua.

When first meeting Master Yantou, Shiyan asked, “What is the fundamental, constant principle?”

Yantou said, “Moving.”

Shiyan asked further, “What happens in 'moving'?”

The master said, “There's no fundamental, constant principle.”

Shiyan sank into thought.

The master then said, “If you agree, then you're bound by subject and object. If you disagree, then you fall into endless birth and death..”

With these words, Shiyan had a deep understanding.

Later, Shiyan settled and taught at Auspicious Cliff (Ruiyan) in Tanzhou, Hunan. He was known to often sit outside on a large rock, and could sometimes be heard calling out to himself, “Master!” and then responding to himself, “What?” Then he would continue,
“Stay alert!”
“Yes!”
“Never be deceived by others!”
“Okay!”

Luohan (Dizang) Guichen (867-928)

Master Luohan Guichen came from the area of Eternal Mountain (Changshan) in the modern province of Zhejiang. After ordination at a monastery on the local mountain, Guichen remained there to study monastic discipline for awhile (like most monks), but soon turned his attention to Zen, traveling to Snow Peak in the kingdom of Min (in Fujian) to study with the famous Master Xuefeng Yicun. After some time with the master, Guichen still felt unsatisfied, and decided to try practicing with Xuefeng's most illustrious student, Xuansha Shibe, who taught at his own monastery nearby. Under the guidance of Master Xuansha, Guichen was able to reach maturity in his clarity of mind.

Once Master Xuansha said to Guichen, “The three realms of the world are all just one mind. How do you understand this?”

Guichen pointed to a chair and said, “Master, what do you call this?”

The master said, “A chair.”

Guichen said, “Master, you don't understand that the three realms of the world are all just mind.”

Picking up some bamboo, Master Xuansha said, “I call this a stick of bamboo. What do you call it?”

Guichen said, “I also call it a stick of bamboo.”

The master said, “Even if you search across the entire earth for someone who understands the Way of Awakening, nobody can be found.”

One day in a talk Master Xuansha said, “Senior teachers all over the country always talk about guiding and benefiting all beings. I ask you all – how would you guide someone who was blind, deaf, and mute? If you spoke to them, they wouldn't hear it. If you held up a staff or a whisk, they wouldn't see it. If you want them to speak, they cannot. How would you guide them? If you cannot help them then the Way of Awakening cannot be said to be spiritually fulfilling for all.”

Guichen came forward from the assembly and said, “I have eyes and ears, master, how do you guide me?”

The master said, “I'm ashamed.” Then he returned to the abbot's room.

Eventually Guichen attracted the attention of several prominent rulers of the various political centers in Fujian Province. He was offered his first teaching appointment at the Arhat (Luohan) Monastery, and here he established his reputation and acquired his first teacher's name.

One day a monk asked Master Luohan Guichen, “What is Luohan's single phrase?”

The master said, “If I told you it would turn into two phrases.”

Once a monk asked the master, “What is Luohan's house style?”

Master Luohan said, “I can't tell you.”

The monk asked, “Why not?”

The master said, “Because it's my house style.”

One day, when Master Luohan saw a monk approach, he held up his whisk. The monk bowed. The master asked, “Why did you bow?”

The monk said, "I'm thanking you for your teaching."

The master said, "You see me hold up this whisk, and you say I'm teaching you. When you see the mountains and rivers each day – are they teaching you?"

Another time when Master Luohan saw a monk approach, he again held up his whisk. This monk also bowed. The master said, "When you see me raise the whisk, you bow. Why don't you bow when you see me holding a broom and sweeping everyday?"

As Master Luohan Guichen's reputation grew, the magistrate of Zhangzhou, in southern Fujian, arranged to have a new monastery built for the master to lead. Located west of the city of Fuzhou, it was called Earth Treasury Temple (Dizang Yuan), evoking the bodhisattva of that name (Jijang in Korean, Jizo in Japanese). When completed the master moved there and made it his new teaching center, and thus was later often known by the alternate name of Master Dizang Guichen.

One day a monk from Baofu Monastery came to visit Earth Treasury Temple and had an interview with Master Dizang Guichen. The master asked, "How does Master Baofu teach the Way of Awakening?"

The monk replied, "Once Master Baofu told the community, "I cover your eyes to let you see what's not seen; I cover your ears to let you hear what's not heard; I restrict your mind to let you realize what's not thinking."

Master Dizang said, "Let me ask you – when I don't cover your eyes, what do you see? When I don't cover your ears, what do you hear?

When your mind is not restricted, what do you realize?"

Upon hearing these words the monk had a deep realization.

Once Master Dizang was holding a memorial service for his teacher Xuansha. The monk Xuanze, looking at the altar, noticed that there was

no portrait of Master Xuansha. He asked Master Dizang, “Do you have a portrait of your master?”

Master Dizang clasped his hands, bowed, and said, “Look.”

Xuanze said, “There's no portrait.”

The master said, “It's clear that you don't see it, but it's here.”

Other Disciples of Xuansha Shibei & Baofu Congzhan

Master Jinhua Hongtao, a disciple of Master Xuansha Shibei, was once asked by a monk, “How is it when the ancient mirror is not yet polished?”

Master Jinhua said, “An ancient mirror.”

The monk asked, “How is it after it is polished?”

The master said, “An ancient mirror.”

Master Wolong Huiqiu (d. 913), a disciple of Master Xuansha, taught at Peaceful Country (Anguo) Monastery on Reclining Dragon (Wolong) Mountain. One day Master Wolong said to the monastery director Liao, “My late teacher said that the entire universe of the ten directions is the true human body. Do you still see the monk's hall?”

Director Liao said, “Teacher, don't make illusory flowers in the eyes.”

The master said, “Although my teacher has passed away, his flesh is still warm.”

Master Deshan Dehai, a disciple of Master Baofu Congzhan, taught on Virtue Mountain (Deshan) in Hunan. Once a monk asked Master Deshan, “Who was able to hear Shakyamuni Buddha at the assembly on Vulture Peak?”

Master Deshan said, “The venerable master heard it.”

The monk asked further, “I wonder what was communicated at the assembly on Vulture Peak.”

The master said, “The venerable master understands it.”

Qingliang (Fayan) Wenyi (885-958)

Master Qingliang Wenyi (often called by his posthumous, honorific name Fayan) grew up in Yuhang, near the city of Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province. He became a novice at the young age of seven, and soon distinguished himself as a diligent student and promising scholar. He received full ordination in his late teens in nearby Yuezhou, and devoted himself to studying both the details of monastic discipline, as well as the Confucian classics and the wider literary culture of the day. Even after changing his focus to Zen practice, his literary background would play an important role in shaping the character of his writings and teaching style.

When Wenyi developed a deep interest in Zen teaching, he gave up his other pursuits and went to look for a teacher. Heading south into Fujian Province, Wenyi first entered Eternal Celebration Monastery in Fuzhou to study with Master Changqing Huileng. After some time at this monastery, Wenyi decided to travel further, and set out on pilgrimage with three fellow monks heading west and north towards the famous centers of Zen near the Yangze River in Jiangxi and Hunan.

Early on in their travels, however, they were said to have encountered a period of heavy rainstorms that led them to take shelter in the Earth Treasury Temple just to the west of Fuzhou, where Wenyi had a chance to encounter Master Dizang Guichen.

As Wenyi and his companions were ready to travel on, Master Dizang accompanied them to the gate. Addressing Wenyi, the master said, “I’ve heard you say several times that the three realms are only mind and the myriad phenomena are only consciousness.” The master then pointed to a large rock by the gate and said, “So is that rock inside or outside of your mind?”

Wenyi said, “Inside.”

The master said, "It's going to be a difficult journey carrying such a large rock in your head."

Wenyi couldn't respond. He set down his bag and asked the master to clarify the truth.

The master then asked him, "Venerable, where is it you are going?"

Wenyi said, "I'm wandering on pilgrimage."

The master asked, "What is the meaning of pilgrimage?"

After a pause, Wenyi said, "I don't know."

The master said, "Not knowing is most intimate."

With these words Wenyi had a deep realization. He decided to stay longer at the temple and study with Master Dizang.

All four traveling companions decided to remain at Earth Treasury Temple and all became disciples of Master Dizang. Eventually, though, Wenyi decided to continue his travels and headed west and north into northern Jiangxi Province. When staying in the city of Linchuan, Wenyi was invited by the local governor to take up a teaching position at Honorable Longevity Temple (Chongshou Yuan) and here his teaching career began.

At one of Wenyi's early talks, the senior monk Zhizhao, who had also studied with Master Changqing Huileng, asked Wenyi, "Who is your teaching handed down from?"

Wenyi replied, "Master Dizang"

Zhizhao said, "Aren't you turning your back on our late honorable teacher Master Changqing?"

Wenyi said, "I don't understand one of Master Changqing's sayings."

Zhizhao said, "Why don't you ask me about it?"

Wenyi said, "Among the ten thousand things, a single body is revealed. What does this mean?"

Zhizhao lifted a fly whisk.

Wenyi said, "This is just something you learned at Changqing. In your position here as head monk, what can you do?"

Zhizhao couldn't respond.

Wenyi then asked, "When a single body is revealed among the ten thousand things, does this dispel the ten thousand things or not?"

Zhizhao said, "It doesn't dispel them."

Wenyi said, "You're stuck in duality."

Some other monks then said, "The ten thousand things are dispelled."

Wenyi shouted. Then he said, "Among the ten thousand things, just a single body is revealed.'

As Wenyi's reputation began to grow, he attracted the attention of Li Jing, the ruler of the newly independent kingdom of the "Southern Tang" in the present-day province of Jiangsu. Wenyi was invited by Li Jing to become the abbot of Expressing Gratitude (Bao'en) Monastery outside of the city of Nanjing, and, accepting the post, began an influential teaching career in this new region. He was soon transferred to the nearby Clear Coolness (Qingliang) Monastery which became his main teaching center and here he attracted a large following. Known as Master Qingliang from this point and for the remainder of his life, upon his passing the ruling officials granted him the title "Great Dharma Eye Zen Master (Da Fayan Chanshi). This prestigious title, shortened to "Fayan", was the name ascribed to the master by the main compiler of the influential *Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp Record*, the monk Daoyuan, who was a second-generation disciple of the master. The close relationship between Master Qingliang and this important text ensured that the master was well represented and honored in the annals of Zen history.

One day a monk asked Master Qingliang Wenyi, "What is the first principle?"

The master said, "When I speak to you, that is the second principle."

Once a monk asked Master Qingliang, "What is the second moon?"

The master said, "The phenomena of the universe."

The monk asked, "What is the first moon?"
The master said, "The universe of phenomena."

Someone once brought up a story about a hermit with Master Qingliang. Above the door to his hut the hermit had written the character "mind"; above his window he had written "mind"; and on his wall he had written "mind." Master Qingliang commented, "Above his door he should have written 'door'; above his window he should have written 'window'; and on his wall he should have written 'wall.'"

The monk Huichao once asked Master Qingliang, "What is the Awakened One?"
The master said, "You are Huichao."

One day Master Qingliang and some of his monks went to examine the monastery's spring-fed water cistern. The outlet had become clogged with sand. The master said, "When the eye of the spring is obstructed, sand is in the way. When the eye of the truth is obstructed, what is in the way?"

The monks were unable to answer. The master said, "The eye is in the way."

Once the monk Xuanze, who had practiced with several teachers including Master Dizang Guichen, and was now serving as director of Qingliang Monastery, was asked by Master Qingliang, "How long have you been in this community?"

Xuanze replied, "I've been here for three years."

The master asked, "How come you've never asked me questions about the teaching?"

Xuanze said, "I don't want to mislead you. When I was in the assembly of Master Yuezhou Qianfeng, I was able to realize peace and joy."

The master asked, “With what words were you able to enter?”

Xuanze said, “When I asked Master Yuezhou what my true self was, he said, 'The fire spirit comes seeking fire.'”

Master Qingliang said, “Good words, but I'm afraid you didn't understand them.”

Xuanze explained, “The fire spirit has the nature of fire – already being fire but still seeking fire is just like being the self but still seeking the self.”

The master said, “Now I'm sure that you don't understand. If the teaching of awakening was like that, awakening wouldn't have come down to this day.”

Xuanze, in anger, immediately left the room, packed his bag, and departed from the monastery. But as he walked down the road he began to reconsider, thinking, “He is respected by many practitioners; perhaps his pointing out my mistake might have some validity.” He then returned to the monastery and apologized to the master.

The master said, “Why don't you ask me your original question?”

So Xuanze asked, “What is my true self?”

The master said, “The fire spirit comes seeking fire.”

Xuanze had a deep awakening.

Longji Shaoxiu

Master Longji Shaoxiu first trained under Master Changqing Huileng in Fuzhou, together with his friend Wenyi. He was one of the group of monks who, with Wenyi, left on a pilgrimage bound for Jiangxi, but who ended up at the Earth Treasury Temple studying under Master Dizang Guichen.

When Shaoxiu first arrived at Master Dizang's temple, the master asked him, “Where are you from?”

Shaoxiu said, “From the south.”

The master asked, "How is the Way of Awakening in the south these days?"

Shaoxiu said, "It's being discussed all over."

The master said, "How can that be compared to the planting, harvesting, and eating rice that goes on here?"

Shaoxiu said, "But what do you do for the world?"

The master said, "What is this you call the world?"

Shaoxiu then had an opening realization.

While at Master Dizang's temple, the monk Hongjin, another of the traveling party, once asked Shaoxiu, "Clearly understanding the unborn nature of life, why are we caught up in birth and death?"

Shaoxiu said, "A bamboo shoot eventually becomes mature bamboo. But meanwhile we can use the shoot-sheathes to make wrapping paper."

Hongjin said, "Later you will realize it yourself."

Shaoxiu said, "I'm now like this. How about you?"

Hongjin said, "This is the monastery director's quarters. This is the head cook's quarters."

Shaoxiu bowed.

After training for some time with Master Dizang, Shaoxiu still hadn't cleared up his doubts. When Wenyi resolved to travel on toward Jiangxi, Shaoxiu decided to join him. Shortly after setting out, Wenyi decided to check his companion's understanding, and said, "Master Changqing had a saying: 'Among the ten thousand things, a single body is revealed.' With this understanding, are the ten thousand things dispelled or not?"

Shaoxiu said, "They're not dispelled."

Wenyi didn't approve. Shaoxiu decided it would be better to return to Master Dizang and get more guidance, than to travel on with an unclear mind. And so he turned back.

After returning to the monastery he went to have an interview with Master Dizang. He said to the master, “Among the ten thousand things, the single body is revealed. What does this mean?”

The master said, “Do you think it means that the ten thousand things are dispelled, or not?”

Shaoxiu said, “They're not dispelled.”

The master said, “Then you have two.”

Then Shaoxiu said, “I don't know whether they're dispelled or not.”

The master said, “What is it you're calling the ten thousand things, anyway?”

With these words Shaoxiu had a deep realization that cleared up his remaining doubts.

Eventually, Shaoxiu did travel on to Jiangxi, and he became a teacher in the region of Fezhou at Dragon Crossing (Longji) Monastery.

Once Master Longji Shaoxiu asked a monk, “Where have you come from?”

The monk replied, “From Master Cuiyan's place.”

Master Longji asked, “How does Master Cuiyan teach his students?”

The monk said, “He often says, 'Going out – meeting the future awakened one Maitreya; going in – seeing the original teacher Shakyamuni.'”

Master Longji said, “How can he talk like that?”

The monk asked, “What do you say, teacher?”

The master said, “Going out – who do you meet? Going in – who do you see?”

Disciples of Yunmen Wenyan

When Master Dongshan Shouchu (910-990) first met his teacher Master Yunmen, the master asked him, “Where are coming from?”

Shouchu replied, “From Jiangxi.”

Master Yunmen asked, “Where did you spend the summer training period?”

Shouchu said, “At Baoci Monastery in Hunan.”

The master continued, “When did you leave there?”

Shouchu said, “On the twenty-fifth of the eighth month.”

After a pause, the master said, “I’ll spare you three blows of my staff.”

The next day Shouchu went back to see Master Yunmen and asked, “Teacher, yesterday you said I deserved three blows of your staff. I don’t understand what my fault was.”

The master shouted, “You rice-bag! Is this how you’ve been wandering around Jiangxi and Hunan?”

At these words Shouchu had a deep realization.

Eventually Shouchu became a teacher on Cave Mountain (Dongshan) in Jiangxi.

Once, in the monastery kitchen, a monk asked Master Dongshan Shouchu, “What is the essence of the Way of Awakening?”

The master said, “Three pounds of sesame.”

Master Shaozhou Zhangjing taught at a monastery in Shaozhou, the same region (in the southern province of Guangdong) where he had trained with Master Yunmen Wenyan at Cloud Gate Monastery. One day Master Shaozhou said to his community, “If you take one step forward, you will be opposing reality. If you take one step back, you will be out of touch with phenomena. If you remain unmoving, you’re just being like an insentient being.”

A monk then asked, “How can we not be like an insentient being?”

The master said, “Keep moving in all your daily activities.”

The monk asked, “How can we not oppose reality and not lose touch with phenomena?”

The master said, “One step forward, one step back.”

The monk bowed.

Then the master said, “The practice of going beyond can be understood in this way. But I won't approve it.”

The monk said, “Teacher, please point it out directly for me.”

The master then struck him and drove him out of the hall.

Once senior monk Shen and senior monk Ming, both disciples of Master Yunmen, were traveling by foot along the Huai River.

Watching a fisherman haul in a net, they saw a carp jump out and escape. Shen said, “Brother Ming, did you see that? How wonderful – just like a skilled practitioner.”

Ming said, “That was pretty good, but how come the fish didn't avoid being trapped by the net in the first place? That would have been much better.”

Shen said, “Ming, there is still something keeping you from being awake.”

That night Ming realized the meaning of Shen's words.

The Hermit of Lotus Flower Peak lived near Tiantai Mountain in Zhejiang Province. One day he held up his staff and asked the community, “When all the previous masters reached this, why didn't they stay here?”

No one responded.

The hermit said, on their behalf, “Because staying here is no help for others.”

Then he asked, “After all, what should we do?”

Lifting his staff and laying it across his shoulders, he answered again for the silent assembly, “Just put your staff on your shoulders and enter directly into the ten thousand peaks.”

Part Two: Discourses

Bodhidharma (c.450-c.530) – *The Two Entrances and Four Practices*

There are many paths for entering the Way, but essentially they are all of two kinds - entering through principle and entering through practice.

To enter through principle means to directly awaken to the truth on the basis of the teaching. One must have a profound intuitive understanding that all beings, whether ordinary or awakened, share the same single true nature, and that this is not apparent to ordinary people only because of mistaken ideas and attachments. If one abandons the false and takes refuge in the truth, dwelling steadily in wall meditation, and if one gives up thoughts of self and other, common person and sage, and abides in the present, unmoving and unwavering, no longer chasing after scriptures and intellectual understanding, then one is in accord with the principle. Here there is no discriminations, no willful effort; it is still and complete. This is entering through principle.

Entering through practice involves four all-encompassing essential practices: the practice of bearing adversity, the practice of accepting conditions with equanimity, the practice of seeking nothing, and the practice of accord with the essential teaching.

First - bearing adversity. When encountering difficulties those who practice the Way should reflect: "For innumerable eons I've forsaken the fundamental and pursued the frivolous, tossed by currents and waves through various states of existence, making numberless mistakes and transgressions. Now, even if I seem to do no wrong, I am reaping the natural consequences of past actions. No one in heaven or on earth can see the course it takes. I accept it patiently, with an open heart, without animosity or complaint." A scripture says, "When encountering hardship, don't be distressed; instead recognize the source of consciousness behind it, and open up to the fundamental." Cultivating this approach, you are in accord with the Principle, and even in adversity one enters the Way.

Second is the practice of equanimity about conditions. All living beings, having no separate self, are continuously shaped by causes and conditions. Both hardship and ease are produced by conditions. If we experience such positive phenomena as attaining great achievements and acclaim, this is simply due to past causes and conditions. As soon as these conditions are played out, it will be gone. Why should you grasp at it and celebrate it? Success and failure depend upon conditions, but the source of mind does not gain or lose. Those who remain unmoved even by the winds of good fortune are steadfastly in accord with the Way.

Third is the practice of seeking nothing. Because of delusion, people of this world are always longing for something - this is seeking. The wise awaken to the truth and abandon this conventional trend. Returning to peace in their hearts, realizing there's nothing to do, they change according to seasons. The myriad forms of the world stir and swirl, but all are empty of substance, containing nothing worth desiring. The goddesses of good and bad fortune always travel together; the whole world caught in craving is like a burning house, but the virtuous remain at the source of forms, while abiding in the world. Pain inevitably comes with having a body - who can arrive at the state of accepting all with tranquility? If you arrive here, you cease all thoughts of other states of being, no longer seeking anything. A sutra says, "To seek is to suffer; to seek nothing is joy." To know this and to let go of seeking anything is to truly practice the Way.

Fourth is the practice of being in accord with the essential teaching.

This teaching is the truth of pure, essential nature - that all forms are empty of substance and are only expressions of one essential nature.

There is no "defiled" to reject, or "sacred" to grasp, no "self" or "other." The Vimalakirti Sutra says, "In the essential teaching there are no beings, because there is freedom from the delusive concept of 'beings'.

In the essential teaching there is no self because there is freedom from the delusive concept of 'self'. ” When the wise understand and embrace

this truth, they are practicing accord with the teaching. Since in the teaching there is nothing lacking, the wise can practice generosity, freely giving their bodies, lives and possessions without any regret.

Fully understanding the emptiness of giver, gift, and recipient, they do not fall into bias or attachment. Abandoning all impediments, they harmonize with evolving life, naturally leading all living beings toward liberation without grasping at appearances or ideas. This is the practice benefiting self and others together, the majestic path of the Bodhisattva.

In the same way they also practice the other five perfections (ethics, patience, whole-heartedness, focus, and primordial wisdom). While practicing these six perfections as the dropping off of delusion, the wise have no thought of practicing them - thus they practice nothing at all. This is practicing in accord with the essential teaching.

Master Bodhidharma also said, "When one does not understand, the person pursues phenomena; when one understands, phenomena pursue the person. When one is deluded, forms draw in consciousness; when one understands, consciousness draws in forms."

Based on translations by Nelson Foster, Andy Ferguson, John R. McRae, and Bill Porter from a text by the monk Tanlin (probably a student of Huike) which presents a summary of Bodhidharma's teaching. The text was probably composed around the mid sixth century. Last line from associated texts, based on Jeffrey L. Broughton's translation.

Master Yuan (dates unknown)

Once someone asked Master Yuan, "Should we rely on scriptural teachings, or on respected people's views?"

Master Yuan said, "You should rely on neither people's views nor the traditional teachings. If you recognize your own bodily energy you can avoid the deceptions and delusions of both people and teachings. Then your spirit will remain unharmed."

Another time someone asked, “Why do you not expound the teachings?”

Master Yuan said, “If I were to set up a teaching to expound, it would simply be deceiving you...whenever there are terms and written words, it is all deception. If I spoke of it, what purpose would that serve?”

“Then what is the path?”

“As soon as you produce the thought of wanting to get on the path, clever mental figuring begins to arise, and you fall into having 'mind'. When desiring the notion of 'path', crafty artifice will always arise.”

“What is 'crafty artifice'?”

“It's pursuing intellectual understanding and seeking names – when you do, a hundred schemes arise. If you want to cut off crafty artifice, don't create the thought of enlightenment and don't get involved in intellectual knowledge. If you can accomplish this, then for the first time you will experience bodily energy. If you have this spirit, and you refrain from esteeming intellectual knowledge or pursuing the teachings, then you will find some peace.”

Another time Master Yuan said, “If you are able to stop grasping at interpretations and cease the esteeming of knowledge, then you will be a peaceful person. Even if there is just one teaching that you esteem or value, this teaching will be the one most capable of binding you, and you will fall into having 'mind'...If you do not seek special understanding, do not set yourself up as a teacher for others, and do not make the traditional teachings into your master, you will finally walk alone in spontaneity.”

Master Yuan also once said, “If you do not give rise to a demon mind, then I can guide you.”

Someone asked, “What is a 'demon mind'?”

The master said, “Closing the eyes and entering concentrated absorption.”

The questioner continued, “What if I can gather the mind into an absorption so that it doesn't move?”

The master said, “This is bondage absorption. It is useless. This is true even of the 'four dhyanas', each of which is merely one stage of quiescence from which you will just return to disturbance again. They are not to be valued. They are only artificially created phenomena, phenomena that will be destroyed again, not ultimate reality. If you can see that intrinsically there is neither quiescence nor disturbance, then you will be able to exist of yourself. The person who is not pulled into either quiescence or disturbance is a true person of spirit.”

Once someone asked, “Please teach me, your disciple, to quiet the mind.”

Master Yuan answered, “Bring me your mind and I will quiet it for you.”

Another student once asked, “Please, master, help me to become absolved of my sins.”

Master Yuan said, “Bring your sins right here and I will absolve you of them.”

The student said, “Sins don't have any kind of form that can be presented.”

The master said, “My absolving you of sins is over. Go back to your quarters.”

No details about the identity of Master Yuan are known, although he is assumed to have been in an early circle of practitioners inspired by Bodhidharma, most likely a disciple of Huike. This text comes from a collection of early Zen writings found at Dunhuang, probably dating from the sixth - seventh century.

This rendering is based on the translation by Jeffrey L. Broughton in *The Bodhidharma Anthology*.

Dayi Daoxin (580-651) – *Essentials of Entering the Way and Pacifying the Mind*

First, as the body is fundamental, one should focus on a thorough awareness of the body...It is ultimately impermanent and never exists independently. Even though, while healthy, it seems to persist independently and substantially, it is (on closer inspection) ultimately insubstantial. The *Vimalakirti Sutra* says: “The body is like a floating cloud – in an instant it disappears.”

One should maintain an awareness of one's own body as without substance; as purely an experience like a shadow, which can be seen but not grasped. Wisdom-awareness appears within this shadow. Ultimately without location, wisdom is unmoving, yet responds to all things, forever transforming. It produces the six senses and their realms of perception – all insubstantial, like dreams or illusions.

...To “maintain the One without wavering” is to focus on remaining with this single awareness with the eye of non-grasping purity, and to be committed to this practice at all times without wandering off. When the mind tries to run away, bring it back quickly.

...When the eye sees something, there is actually no outside “thing” that enters the eye. Like a mirror reflecting a face – although perfectly clear, there is no “thing” within the mirror. A person's face doesn't enter into the mirror; the mirror doesn't reach out to a person's face...If the mind becomes aware of some sensory stimuli and perceives it as coming from outside oneself, then return to a view of that sense object as not ultimately substantive (or independent).

The conditionally generated experiences of the mind do not come from anywhere within the ten directions, nor do they go anywhere.

When you can regularly observe thinking, discrimination, deluded views, feelings, random thoughts, and confusion as not individually substantive mental events, then your practice is becoming basically stable. If you can settle the mind and remain free of entanglement with

this continual conditioned thinking, you will be serene and fully aware, and discover an end to your afflictions. This is called liberation.

If on observing the mind's subtle afflictions, and it's agonizing confusions, and even its deepest introspections, you can, in a single moment, let go of them all and return to gentle stability, your mind has naturally become peaceful and pure. Only you must be courageous...don't be lazy! Dive into it!

When you are beginning to practice seated mediation and mind observation, you should sit in solitary presence, unified with your place. First, sit upright in a correct posture, loosen your robe and belt, and relax your body, (perhaps) with some self-message. Exhale all the air out from your lower abdomen, and become simple and calm... Dissolving completely in deep unknowing, one's breathing becomes tranquil and one's mind gradually settled. Your energy becomes clear and sharp, your awareness bright and pure. Observing carefully, inside and outside become empty and pure, and the mind becomes still. From this stillness, the realization of the sage becomes manifest.

...The presently arrived body of true nature is pure, perfect, and complete. All forms are manifested within it, even though that nature is without mental effort. It is like a clear mirror suspended in the air – all the various objects are manifested within it, but the mirror is without any effort to generate them.

From the *Ju Dao An Xin Yao Fang Pien Fa Men* (early 700's) written by members of the “East Mountain School” as a summary of Master Daoxin's teaching. Based on a translation by John R. McRae.

(for a later discourse also attributed to Master Daoxin, see the end of the Discourses section)

Daman Hongren (601-674) – *Essentials of Cultivating the Mind*

The essence of cultivating the Way is to discern that one's own body-mind awareness is inherently pure, not subject to birth or death, and without division. Perfect and complete in its self-nature, present

awareness is the fundamental teacher. Focusing on it exclusively is superior to reflecting on the awakened ones of the ten directions.

How do you know that one's own awareness is inherently pure?...To use the bright sun as a metaphor: even if the clouds and mists of the world were to arise together in all directions so that the world became dark, still, how could the sun ever be extinguished?... The sun's light is not destroyed, but merely deflected by the clouds and mists. The pure mind possessed by all sentient beings is like this – simply covered by the layered clouds of discriminative thinking, false ideas, and ascriptive views. If you just distinctly maintain awareness of present clear mind and don't manufacture false thoughts, then the reality-sun of nirvana will be naturally manifested. That is how you can experience that your own mind is inherently pure.

How do you know that one's own awareness is inherently not subject to birth and death? The Vimalakirti Sutra says: “Suchness is without birth, suchness is without death.” The term “suchness” refers to the nature of awakened presence, the mind which is the source of all phenomena... Suchness is fundamentally, originally existent, not conditionally produced. The sutra also says, “ordinary beings all embody suchness; sages and wise ones also embody suchness.”

Although the names and characteristics of ordinary and awakened beings are different, the essential reality of suchness embodied in each is identical and is not subject to birth or death... This is how it is realized that one's own mind is inherently not subject to birth and death.

Why is the mind the fundamental teacher? The true mind exists of itself and does not come from outside. As a teacher, it does not even require any tuition fee!... If you discern the “suchness” of the mind and maintain awareness of it, you reach the shore of nirvana... By clearly maintaining awareness of the mind, the false mind (of attachment to ideas) is not activated and you reach the birthless. Therefore we understand that the mind is the fundamental teacher.

Why is focusing on your own mind superior to reflecting on the awakened ones of the ten directions? You cannot transcend birth and death by constantly imagining awakened beings divorced from yourself, but you reach the shore of nirvana by maintaining awareness of your

own fundamental mind. The Buddha says in the Diamond Sutra, “Anyone who views me in terms of form and seeks me by sound is practicing a mistaken path and is unable to see the one who is 'thus-come.’” Therefore we realize that maintaining awareness of (your own) true mind is superior to reflecting on awakened ones divorced from oneself. (But this word “superior” is only used for encouragement in the context of practice – In reality, the essence of the ultimate fruit of awakening is harmoniously inclusive and without opposing dualities)...

If you can maintain awareness of the true mind without generating false thoughts or the illusion of personal possession, then you will automatically be equal to the Awakened Ones.

The nature of true presence is the core of both ordinary beings and awakened ones just the same. Why, then, are awakened ones liberated, while ordinary beings are deluded? At this point we enter the inconceivable which cannot be understood by the ordinary mind. You awaken by discerning the true mind, you become deluded by losing awareness of this true nature. If the conditions (for awakening) come together, then they come together – it cannot be definitively explained.

Simply commit to your conviction of the ultimate truth, and maintain awareness of your own true mind. Do this constantly with focused energy, without fabricating false thoughts or the illusion of personal possession. Awakening then manifests of itself.

If you ask a lot of questions, the number of conceptual terms will simply become greater and greater. If you want to understand the essential point of the Awakened Way – then know that maintaining awareness of mind is the fundamental basis of nirvana, the essential gateway for entering the path, the basic principle of all the scriptures, and the teacher of all the awakened ones of the past, present, and future...

The essence of what is called nirvana is serene dissolution... When one's mind focuses on the true, false thoughts dissolve. When false thoughts cease, correct mindfulness arises, generating the wisdom of serene illumination, or the total comprehension of reality-nature, which is also called the experience of nirvana.

All concepts, and all affairs of past, present, and future, should be seen as dust on a mirror – when the dust is gone, true nature naturally becomes clearly visible. That which is learned by the deluded mind is completely useless. True learning is what is learned by the unconditioned mind, which never ceases perfect awareness. Although we can call this “true learning,” ultimately there is nothing to be learned. Why? Because “self” and “liberation” are both insubstantial, they are neither different nor the same. Thus, the essential principle of “nothing to be learned” is evident.

All the Awakened Ones of the past, present, and future are born within your own consciousness. When you do not give birth to false thoughts, when your illusions of personal possession have been relinquished, the awakened one is born within your own consciousness. You can only experience awakening by maintaining awareness of true mind.

My only desire is that you discern this fundamental mind for yourself. Therefore, I employ you: Make effort! Make effort! All the myriad scriptures and treatises say nothing other than that maintaining the true mind is the essential way to awakening... Do not try to search outside of yourself – this only leads to the suffering of continued conventional patterns. Just maintain the same mind of awareness in every moment of thought, and in all phases of mental activity.

When you sit...you may experience all kinds of good and bad psychological states...when you perceive such things, concentrate the mind and do not become attached to them. They are all insubstantial manifestations of deluded thinking. A scripture says, “The triple realm is an empty apparition that is solely the creation of the individual mind.” Do not worry if you cannot achieve special concentration or do not experience the various states of meditative absorption – just constantly maintain clear awareness of the present mind in all your actions.

If you stop generating delusive ideas and the illusion of personal possession, the you will realize that all the myriad phenomena are nothing other than manifestations of your own mind. The awakened sages only preach with extensive and verbal teachings because the

mental tendencies of sentient beings differ, and require a variety of responses. In actuality, the (present) mind is the basic subject of all the myriad teachings and philosophies.

Make effort and remain humble. It is rare to get a chance to hear this essential teaching. Of those that hear it, very few are able to practice it... With great care keep your self clam, moderate your sensory activity, and attentively view the mind that is the source of all phenomena. Allow it to shine distinctly and clearly at all times, without letting yourself fall into mental blankness.

What is mental blankness? People who practice special concentration exercises can inhibit the true mind by being dependent on particular sensory activities, dulled states of mind, or restricted breathing...Although they may practice constantly, they cannot experience true clarity; they cannot reveal the mind which is the source of all phenomena. This is called blankness.

One can have success with minimal exertion by merely donning tattered robes, eating simple food, and clearly maintaining awareness of the present mind. Deluded people of the world do not understand this truth and put themselves through great anguish in their ignorance.

Hoping to achieve liberation, they cultivate a broad range of superficial practices to gain merit – only to fall into the inevitable discontent of habitual cyclic existence.

(So just) make your body and mind perfectly empty and peaceful, without any discriminative thinking at all. Sit properly with the body erect. Regulate the breath and concentrate the mind so it is not within you, not outside of you, and not in any location in between. Do this carefully but naturally. View your own consciousness tranquilly and attentively, so you can see how it is always moving, like flowing water or a glittering mirage. After you have perceived this consciousness, simply continue to observe it gently and naturally, without getting fixed anywhere inside or outside of yourself. Do this calmly and attentively until its fluctuations dissolve into peaceful stability. This flowing consciousness will disappear like a gust of wind. When this consciousness disappears, all illusions disappear along with it...one's

own mind becomes peacefully stable, and pure. I cannot describe it any further.

Anyone who can keep this mind in sight during all activities and in the face of the desires for forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch, and in the midst of the winds of success and failure, criticism and praise, honor and abuse, suffering and pleasure, has established a pure practice (brahmacharya), and will never again be born into the realm of birth and death.

My disciples have recorded this treatise from my oral teachings so that readers might intuitively resonate with the words and perceive the meaning behind them... I want everyone to discern their fundamental mind and experience awakening at once.

The basic principle of this teaching is the manifestation of the one vehicle. Its ultimate intention is to lead the deluded to liberation, allowing them to become free from the realm of birth and death themselves, and to help others to cross over to the other shore of nirvana. But this treatise only speaks of the benefit to oneself, it does not elaborate on how to benefit others. It should be understood as a gate of direct practice. Anyone who practices according to these instructions will realize awakening immediately.

From the *Xiu Xin Yao Lun* (c.700) written by members of the “East Mountain School” (Hongren's students) as a summary of Master Hongren's teaching. Based on a translation by John R. McRae.

A monk asked Master Hongren, “Why don't we study the way of awakening in cities where there are many people, instead of at places deep in the mountains?”

Hongren answered, “The timbers needed to make a great building originally came from secluded mountain valleys. They can't be grown where many people are congregated. Since they are far from crowds of people, they can't be chopped down or harmed by axes, and are able to grow into great trees, which later can be used to make central beams and pillars. So in studying the teaching, one should find refuge for the spirit in remote mountain valleys, escaping far from the troubles of the

dusty world. People should nourish their nature in deep mountains, keeping away from worldly affairs for a long time. When not always confronting common affairs the mind will naturally become at ease.

Studying Zen in this way is like planting a tree, with the result that later it can bear fruit.”

During this era the great teacher Hongren only sat peacefully in an upright position and did not compile writings. He taught Zen orally to his personal disciples, quietly passing on the teaching to many others.

From *The Record of the Lankavatara Masters (Lengqie Shizi Ji, before 750)*, based on a translation by Andy Ferguson.

Shitou Xiqian (700-790)

Our wisdom-gate has been handed down from the ancient awakened ones. Without discussing levels of mystical absorption or effort at spiritual progress, we simply actualize the direct insight that awake mind itself is the truth.

Buddha and common people, awakening and delusion, are just different names for the same one body of experience. You should each recognize that your own mind's aware essence is completely apart from ideas of finite or eternal. Your nature is altogether beyond “pure” or “defiled;” it is perfectly clear and totally complete, and exactly the same in sages and in ordinary people. It functions beyond the limits of any fixed patterns, reaches everywhere, and is not contained by the labels “mind,” “consciousness” or “thought.” The three realms of desire, form, and formlessness; and the six states of living beings, are all images coming from your own mind. They are like the moon reflected on water – how can there be any birth or death? If you realize this, you have all you need.

Based on translations by Andy Ferguson, Thomas Cleary, and James Mitchell & Yulie Lou, of Shitou's records in the *Ancestral Hall Collection (Zu Tang Ji, 952)* and the *Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp (Jingde Chuan Deng Lu, 1004)*

Song of the Grass-Roofed Hermitage

I've built a grass-roofed hut where there's nothing of value.
After eating, I relax and enjoy a nap.
When it was first built, already weeds began to sprout.
Now that it's been lived in, it's covered in weeds.
The person in the hut is always home,
but you won't find him inside or outside.
Places worldly people stay, he doesn't stay.
Realms worldly people crave, he doesn't crave.
Though the hut is small, it includes the whole universe.
In ten square feet, this old man illuminates the forms of nature.
A bodhisattva of the all-inclusive path is free of doubt,
but ordinary folk can't help wondering:
won't this shabby hut just fall apart?
Falling apart or not, the original master is present.
Not bound by south or north, east or west.
A solid foundation can't be disturbed.

A bright window beneath the green pines -
jade palaces and vermilion towers can't compare.
Just sitting, covered in a robe and hood,
all things are at rest.
This mountain monk doesn't understand at all
and no longer works to get free.

No need to proudly advertise living here,
arranging seats to attract guests.
Only turn the light to shine back home -
the boundless source can't be grasped or turned away from.

Meet the ancestral teachers, listen to their teaching,
then gather some grass, build a hut, and live there without distraction.
Let go of hundreds of years and completely relax.

Open your hands and walk, innocent.
Thousands of words, innumerable explanations
are only to free you from obstructing ideas.
If you want to know the undying person in the hut,
don't separate from this fragile body here and now.

Based on a translation by Taigen Dan Leighton & Yi Wu, (with reference to James Mitchell's translation) of the *Cao An Ge* recorded in the *Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuan Deng Lu*, compiled in 1004).

Danxia Tianran (739-824)

All of you here must take care of this practice place. The things in this place were not made or named by you – have they not been given as offerings? When I studied with master Shitou he told me that I must personally protect these things. There is no need for further discussion.

Each of you here has a place to put your cushion and sit. Why do you suspect you need something else? Is Zen something you can explain? Is an awakened being something you can become? I don't want to hear a single word about Buddhism.

All of you look and see! Skillful practices and the boundless mind of kindness, compassion, joy, and detachment – these things aren't received from someplace else. Not an inch of these things can be grasped...Do you still want to go seeking after something? Don't go using some sacred scriptures to look for emptiness!

These days students of spirituality are busy with the latest ideas, practicing various meditations and asking about “the way.” I don't have any “way” for you to practice here, and there isn't any doctrine to be confirmed. Just eat and drink. Everyone can do that. Don't hold on to doubt. It's the same everyplace!

Just recognize that Shakyamuni Buddha was a regular old fellow. You must see for yourself. Don't spend your life trying to win some competitive trophy, blindly misleading other blind people, all of you

marching right into hell, struggling in duality. I've nothing more to say.
Take care!

Based on a translation by Andy Ferguson of Danxia's record in the Song Dynasty collections

Mazu Daoyi (709-788)

You who seek understanding should not seek anything. Outside of this mind there is no other essential nature. Outside of essential nature there is no other mind. If you stop chasing what you desire and pushing away what you don't want, you can begin to see the empty nature of transgressions, you can understand that nothing is attained though laborious thinking, and you can realize that there is no separate substance of "self" – all the realms of the world are simply one mind.

The myriad forms of the entire universe are the seal of the single truth.

Whatever forms are seen, are just the seeing of the mind...whatever speech you make it is just phenomena which are the expression of the ultimate principle. Each matter you encounter constitutes the meaning of your existence, and all your actions manifest without hindrance, as does the fruit of the Way of Awakening...Realizing this, one acts according to circumstances – just wearing clothes, eating food, and naturally upholding the practice of a compassionate awakening being.

If one practices like this, is there anything more to be done?

The Way needs no cultivation, just don't create defilement. What is defilement? When, with a mind clinging to birth and death, one acts in a contrived way, then everything becomes defilement. If you want to know the Way directly – ordinary mind is the Way! What is meant by ordinary mind? No contrived behavior, no clinging to ideas of right and wrong, no grasping or rejecting, free of "temporary" or "permanent," free of "worldly" or "sacred." The Vimalakirti Sutra says, "Neither the practice of ordinary people, nor the practice of sages; that is the bodhisattva's practice." Just now, whether walking, standing, sitting, or

lying down – responding to situations and dealing with people as they come – everything is the Way.

The myriad phenomena are all born from the mind; the mind is the root of the myriad phenomena...if you realize this teaching then you are always free...The original source and the myriad phenomena are not different – everything is wonderful function and there is no other principle. All comes from mind...weather constructing or sweeping away, all is sublime function; all is oneself. There is no place to stand where one leaves the truth. The very place one stands on is the truth – it is all one's own being. If that were not so, then who is this?

Walking, standing, sitting, or lying down – everything is always the inconceivable function of suchness...like a cloud in the sky that suddenly appears and then vanishes without a trace, like writing with your finger on water – not being able to establish being born or dying – that is the “great Nirvana.”

Conditioned life is the functioning display of the unconditioned. The unconditioned is the essential nature of conditioned life...The mind can be spoken of as the realm of birth and death or as the realm of suchness. The mind as suchness is like a clear mirror that reflects various images...if the mind grasps at phenomena, at these images, then it becomes caught in causes and conditions, which is the meaning of birth-and-death. If the mind does not grasp at phenomena, then it is called “suchness.”

Although original nature is free from the limits of the particular, it manifests a function of infinite variety. When appearing as delusion, it's called usual, worldly consciousness; when appearing as awakened clarity, it's called wisdom. Realizing the essence is awakening; chasing after phenomena is delusion. Delusion is to be unaware of one's original mind; awakening is to become aware of original nature. When awakened, one is awakened beyond time, and there is no more delusion. It's like when the sun comes out, and all darkness disappears.

It is in contrast to ignorance that one speaks of awakening. Since essentially there is no ignorance, awakening doesn't need to be established either. All living beings, have, since beginningless time, been abiding in the consciousness of truth-nature. In the consciousness

of truth-nature they wear their cloths, eat their food, talk, and respond to things...Because of not knowing how to return to the source, they follow names and seek after forms. This gives rise to confused emotions and delusions, creating all kinds of karma. If one is able in a single moment to illuminate the essence, then everything is revealed as the sacred heart..

Self-nature is originally complete. If you are no longer hindered by ideas of good and evil, then you are one who practices the Way.

Chasing after benefits and rejecting the unattractive, philosophizing about “emptiness” and pursuing special blissful states, all of these are simply worldly, deluded activity. If you seek outside, you move away from it. Just put an end to all mental struggling and figuring...when you no longer grasp a single thought, then the root of birth-and-death is dissolved, and the unexcelled treasury (of the Dharma King) is revealed.

Based on translations by Cheng Chien Bhikshu (Mario Poceski) and Andy Ferguson of *The Record of Mazu (Jiangxi Mazu Daoyi Chanshi Yulu*, c.1085) which drew material from the earlier *Ancestral Hall Collection (Zu Tang Ji*, of 952) and the *Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp (Jingde Chuan Deng Lu*, of 1004).

Layman Pangyun (740?-808)

My daily activity is not unusual;
I just remain in spontaneous harmony.
Not grasping or rejecting,
nothing left to assert or oppose.
What use are fancy titles
and expensive clothes of vermilion and purple?
This entire mountain is free
of even a speck of dust.
Supernatural powers and miraculous activity:
fetching water and carrying firewood

Not willing to let go of grasping and rejecting,
In vain you labor studying the spiritual path.
You read the prescription but you don't take the medicine-
How can you be free from your sickness?
Grasp “emptiness” and it turns out to be form;
Grasping form it soon proves impermanent.
Form and emptiness – neither are my possessions;
Sitting erect, I see my native home.

The past is already past-
Don't try to regain it.
The present doesn't stay-
Don't try to grasp it over and over.
The future isn't here yet-
Don't ponder it beforehand.
When the three times are revealed as non-existent,
mind is the same as awakened nature.
To quietly function relying on emptiness-
This is manifesting profound action.
Not even the least phenomena really exists-
Whatever comes to the eye, leave it be.
No rules to be kept, no filth to be cleaned;
With empty mind truly revealed,
All things no longer have birth or death.
When you are like this
The ultimate achievement is finished.

No-greed surpasses charity.
No-delusion surpasses concentration.
No-ill will surpasses morality.
No-self-centered thinking surpasses cultivating connections.
I follow an ordinary person's affairs,
and at night sleep at ease.

In winter I use the fireplace
with the fire that's free of smoke.
I neither fear the dark spirit of misfortune,
nor seek after her sister good luck.
Trusting in the flow, what's needed comes.
We all ride together in the boat of wisdom -
if you have this understanding,
your merit has no bounds.

When the mind's left as is,
the spirit is naturally empty.
Without a need for medicine,
ills disperse of themselves.
When ills disperse,
the jewel in the lotus appears.
Don't worry over affairs,
don't rush around!
The wise, seeing wealth and craving,
know them to be empty illusions.
Food and clothes sustain body and life,
but only for awhile.-
I advise you to learn being as is.
When it's time I move my hermitage and go,
and there's nothing left behind.

Based on translations by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, Yoshitaka Iriya, and Dana Fraser, (with reference to Cheng-Chien Bhikshu [Mario Poceski]) of the records of Layman Pang, originally in the *Ancestral Hall Collection* (of 952) and the *Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp* (of 1004).

Baizhang Huaihai (749-814)

A monk once asked – How can a person gain freedom?
Baizhang said – If you realize it in this moment, then you've realized

it. If you instantly cut off the emotional clinging of the self, all cravings and attachments, the greed and grasping, the notions of degraded and pure, in other words, all delusive thoughts; then you'll be like the sun or the moon hanging free in space, shining clearly...(You'll be like) a great elephant crossing a raging river – engulfed in the rapids but not losing your footing. Neither heaven nor hell can pull you in. When you read a scripture or hear a teaching, the words all return to yourself...You'll see that all verbal teachings are only a reflection of the immediacy of self-nature and are just meant to point the way. Letting go of all sound and form, but not dwelling in the notion of detachment, and not holding any intellectual comprehension – this is the true practice of reading scriptures and hearing teachings. If you let everything be as it is, always acting with clarity according to the situation, this is truly dropping off all fetters.

When a person of the Way encounters all kinds of painful or pleasant, agreeable or disagreeable situations, their mind is not pushed around. Not thinking of fame or profit, clothes or food, and not seeking for any merit or blessing, they are no longer obstructed by anything in the world. With nothing to cling to, free from craving, they equally accept pain and pleasure. A coarse robe provides protection from the cold, simple food is all that's necessary to support the body. Letting go, they might appear like a fool, or like a deaf and mute person – but it is only then that one gains some understanding. If you extensively pursue intellectual understanding, seeking merit and wisdom, this is all just birth-and-death; it is useless for apprehending reality. Blown around by the wind of conceptual knowledge, such a person is drowned in the ocean of birth-and-death

...Not to be controlled by greed for anything is called “saving others.” Not to dwell in the notion of self is called “saving oneself”...Right now, if you wish to realize awakening immediately, you should just let both self and outer objects disappear, let subject and object dissolve, let both self and world return to emptiness. Then...you can be called one who does not fall into any category at all. This is having faith in the true

teaching, observing true ethics, practicing true generosity, true study, attaining true wisdom, and so on.

If one is speaking to worldly people, they should be told to abandon possessions, keep ethical precepts, practice formal meditation, and study teaching. To those who are beyond ordinary practices..we should not talk in that way...To true renunciates, I point out the defilement of purity. They should be taught to abandon all things, material or spiritual; to give up cultivation and attainment, and let go even of the notion of giving up. But among monks and devoted practitioners who cannot let go of the diseases of greed and aversion...they should still be taught to observe ethical precepts, practice formal meditation, and study teachings.

All verbal teachings are just like cures for diseases. Because the diseases are not the same, the medicines are also not the same. That's why it's sometimes said that there is original nature, and sometimes that there is no original nature. True words cure sickness. If the treatment brings about healing, then the words are true. If they cannot cure sickness, then they're false words. True words are false if they give rise to viewpoints. False words become true if they cut off the delusions of beings. Because the diseases are unreal, there are only unreal medicines to cure them.

Fundamentally, the truth is already present in everyone. In actuality, it is not a thing, - you do not need to know or understand it, you don't need to affirm or deny it. Just cut off dualistic thinking – cut off the notion “it exists” and the notion “it doesn't exist”...so that there are no traces of either side. Then when either side is brought up, you are unattached to them and no measures can limit you. Ultimately there is no deficiency or surplus, no sacred or profane, no separate light or dark. This is not having knowledge, yet not lacking knowledge; not bondage and not liberation. It is not any name or category at all...How can you carve and polish empty space trying to make an image of an awakened one? In the Vimalakirti Sutra it says, “reality has nothing with which it can be compared” because there is no particular thing that can be

equated with it. The body of reality is not fabricated and does not fall within the confines of any classification. Thus, it is said that the understanding of the sage is nameless and cannot be spoken of; the empty door of truth as it is cannot be tarried in. It is said that insects can land anywhere except on a burning flame – similarly people can form attachment to any particular thing, but they cannot form attachments to ultimate wisdom.

All things never proclaim themselves empty, nor do they declare that they are substantial. They don't say that they are right or wrong, pure or impure. Neither is there a particular obstructing mind that binds anyone. It's only that people themselves actively create false attachments, giving rise to all kinds of positions, creating all kinds of views, desires, and fears. Just realize that all the objects of your experience are not created and existing by themselves – they all come into existence because of a single deluded thought that mistakenly attaches onto appearances. If you realize that mind and phenomena are not two separate things that reach out to each other, then you are liberated at that very spot. All things are at peace and finished as they are, and that very spot is the sanctuary of awakening.

You should first put to end all involvements and bring to rest all your various concerns. Whether wholesome or unwholesome, mundane or extraordinary, just let go of all things. Do not try to remember, recollect, get caught up, or ponder. Let go of both body and mind, allowing them to be free...with a mouth that doesn't engage in arguments, with a mind that has no tasks before it, the ground of consciousness becomes like the empty sky and the sun of wisdom manifests itself. It's like when the clouds open up and the sun shines through.

Just now, thought after thought, if you notice the diseases of greed and aversion arise, you should just focus on curing them. Don't seek intellectual understanding, pondering meanings and expressions.

Intellectual grasping is a form of craving and craving turns into disease.

Right now, just detach from all things, whether they're present or absent, and even let go of detachment. Passing beyond all stages, you are naturally no different from awakening... just beware of losing your awake attention.

The discipline of activity is simply to drop off the things of the world. Just do not engage in any activity according to your own ideas, then there will be no problem. This is called the discipline of non-doing...As long as there is the arousal of the mind and the stirring of thought, this is all called breaking discipline.

Right this moment, simply do not get caught up, fooled, and disturbed by any present or absent objects, do not stop and dwell in empty clarity, and also do not hold onto any ideas about non-dwelling.

This is called all-embracing study; it is called effort, praise, and remembrance, and it is called widely sharing the liberating truth...when there is no longer any beliefs or ideas about liberation, or even by its absence, then there is no confinement by the good, no confinement by the evil, no confinement by Buddha, no confinement by ordinary beings. The same goes for all assessment or measurements – there is no confinement by any calculating limits at all. Therefore it is said that an awakened one is one who has left confinement and goes beyond all measure.

It is said that awakening beings who practice ultimate wisdom should not grasp any words or depend on the dictates of the teachings...As long as there are verbal formulations, it is all the realm of afflictions and trouble. All verbal teachings remain in the realm of incomplete teaching. The incomplete teaching is a form of transgression. Only the complete teaching is proper practice. But from the view of awakening there is neither proper practice nor transgression, and neither the complete nor the incomplete teachings are admissible...At the point, in the midst of birth one is not obstructed by birth; in death one is not hindered by death...one is free to go or to stay, entering and exiting

without difficulty. When one is like that, there is no discussion of stages, of superiority or inferiority. Even down to the body of an ant, everything is a pure and sublime land. It is inconceivable.

Based on the translation by Mario Poceski of *Baizhang's Extensive Record* (*Baizhang Guang Lu*, c.814)

Fenzhou Wuye (760-821)

The way of our practice is different (from usual worldly preoccupations). After the ancient worthies of the Way experienced realization they went to live in thatched huts and stone shelters. They used old cauldrons with broken legs to cook their food, and passed twenty or thirty years in that way. Unconcerned with fame or wealth, they never bothered about money and accumulating savings.

Completely forgetting about conventional affairs, they concealed their traces among rocks and thickets. When summoned by prominent famous people, they would not respond; when invited by the wealthy, they would not go. How can they be compared to those who, craving fame and entranced by wealth, sink into worldly convention? Those people are like peddlers who in seeking for quick profit lose a much greater wealth

Based on a translation by Mario Poceski of Wuye's record in the *Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuan Deng Lu*, compiled in 1004).

Guishan Lingyu (771-853)

If you want to practice Zen and study the Way, then you should immediately go beyond the expedient teachings. You should harmonize your mind with the path (before you), explore the sublime wonders (around you), make a final resolution (to enter) the ultimate

understanding, and awaken to the source of truth. (To accomplish this) you should extensively ask for instruction from those who have insight, and should stay close to virtuous friends. The sublime wonder of this teaching is difficult to discover - one must pay very careful attention. If you suddenly awaken to the clear origin then defilements are left behind. The various realms and forms of existence; past, present, and future, are all shattered. You then know that no phenomena, internal or external, are real. Arising from mind's transmutations, they are all provisional designations. There is no need to anchor the mind anywhere. When feelings simply do not attach to objects, then how can anything become a hindrance? Let the nature of phenomena flow freely without trying to destroy or maintain anything. The sounds you hear and the forms you see all remain ordinary. Wherever you are, you freely respond to circumstances without any mistake.

The mind of a person of the Way is plain and straightforward without pretense. There is no front or back; there is no deceit or delusion.

Every hour of the day, you remain aware of ordinary things and ordinary actions. Nothing is distorted. You do not need to shut your eyes or ears to remain unattached to things. The sages of the past warned of the dangers of polluting conceptions - when delusion, biased views, and unwholesome thinking habits are abandoned, the mind is as clear and tranquil as the autumn stream...

When you hear the truth you penetrate immediately to the ultimate reality, the realization of which is profound and wondrous. Mind is illuminated naturally and perfectly, free from confusion. On the other hand, there are innumerable theories about spirituality advocated by those seeking reputation and praise. But reality itself cannot be stained by even a speck of dust; no action can distort the truth. When your approach to awakening is like the swift thrust of a sword to the center, then both worldliness and sacredness are completely cut off, and absolute reality is uncovered. Thus the one and the many are revealed as identical. This is the "suchness" of awakening.

A monk asked master Guishan - Does a person who has experienced sudden awakening still need to cultivate (a practice)?

The master said - When you truly awaken, entering into the fundamental and realizing the nature of self and other, then cultivation and non-cultivation are just dualistic opposing ideas.

Right now, even if the conditions for the initial inspiration arrive, even if within a single thought you awaken to your own true reality, there are still habitual tendencies that have accumulated over endless ages that cannot be dispersed in a single instant. You should certainly be taught to gradually let go of unwholesome tendencies and mental habits. That is cultivation. There is no other cultivation that needs to be taught.

Based on translations by Mario Poceski of *Guishan's Admonitions* (*Guishan Jingce*, c.850) and Ch'ang Chun-yuan and Mario Poceski of Guishan's records in the *Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuan Deng Lu*, 1004).

Huangbo Xiyun (c. 776-c.856)

As to cultivating the six perfections (of character) and all the other self-improvement practices, and performing all sorts of virtuous activities to accumulate merit - since you are already complete, you cannot add to that perfection through practice. You should perform practices when there is an appropriate occasion, and return to stillness when the occasion has ended. If you do not clearly see that this mind itself is awakening, but instead want to practice by attaching to forms and seeking rewards, then it is all delusion apart from the Way.

Awakening occurs as the nature of the mind, it doesn't involve the six perfections and myriad practices. These are all merely marginal activities for teaching and helping liberate others in various states and according to circumstances. "Enlightenment," "suchness," "ultimate reality," "liberation"...all of these are expedient, temporary expressions, unnecessary to the awakened mind.

Based on the translation by John Blofeld of *Huangbo's Transmission of Mind Dharma Essentials* (*Huangbo Chanshi Chuanxin Fayao*) and the *Wanling Record* (*Wanling Lu*), both from c.857.

Linji Yixuan (d. 866)

Within true practice, there is no room for special exertion of effort. It is just a matter of being ordinary, without concerns. Shit, pee, wear your clothes, and eat your food. When tired, lay down. Fools laugh at me, but the wise understand.

From the point of view of this mountain monk, there isn't much you need to worry about. Just be ordinary, wearing your clothes and eating your food, passing your time without concerns. All of you coming from various directions, you all have minds fixed on something. You seek the Buddha, or you seek the Truth; you seek liberation and transcendence of the mundane world. Fools! If you want to leave this ordinary world, where are you going to go?

based on a translation by Burton Watson of *Linji's Record* (*Linji Yulu*, 1120) which drew on the complete material in the *Tiansheng Era Expanded Lamp Record* (*Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu*, 1029), and from parts in the earlier *Ancestral Hall Collection* (*Zutangji*, 952) and *Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuan Deng Lu*, 1004).

Attributed to Dayi Daoxin (spoken to Niutou Farong)

The hundred thousand gates of the Awakened Teaching all return to the one heart. The source of the countless sublime practices all come from this one mind. All of the precepts and ethical guidelines, the practice of meditation, the gate of primordial wisdom and all its miraculous manifestations are all your natural possession, not separate from your mind. Every type of misfortune and karmic impediment is fundamentally empty and without substantial existence. All causes and

effects are simply dreams and illusions. There are no suffering worlds to escape from and there is no awakening to search for. The original nature, and the outer appearance of humans and all beings, are identical. The great way is empty and boundless, free from thought and anxiety. If you have merged with this truth, where nothing whatsoever is lacking, what difference is there between yourself and an awakened one? Here there is not a single teaching left. You are just free to abide in your own spontaneous nature. There is no need to contemplate your behavior, no need to practice purifying austerities. Free from desires, having a heart without anger or cares, completely at ease and without impediment; free to go in any direction according to conditions; with no need to deliberately take on any good or evil affairs. In walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, whatever meets your eyes is nothing other than the essential source; all of it just the sublime function of awakening; joyful and carefree. This is called "Buddha."

From *Five Lamps Merged in the Source* (Wudeng Huiyuan , 1253, using earlier materials). Based on translations by Andy Ferguson, Thomas Cleary, and C.H. Wu

General Sources for the Entire Collection

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